

Governing the unaccompanied child

Media, policy and practice

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GOVERNING THE CHILD – MEDIA, POLICY AND PRACTICE

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Governing the unaccompanied minor – media, policy and practice

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Photo: a section of larger graffiti-art, painted on the wall of the transfer unit for unaccompanied minors in Bruxelles, Belgium. Author's private collection, June 2012

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*To my mother, my children Selma and August and my loving
Nils*

*“The single story creates stereotypes.
And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue,
but that they are incomplete. They make one story become
the only story.” Chimamanda Adichie 2009*

GOVERNING THE CHILD – MEDIA, POLICY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract

Through three different case studies, this thesis analyzes how unaccompanied minors are constructed and governed as a specific group of refugees in Norway and Sweden.

The first study investigates the Norwegian and Swedish media debate from 2000-2008 by examining how incidences of so-called “missing unaccompanied children” were highlighted on the media agenda. Part of this has also been to analyze the specific official actions taken by Norwegian and Swedish authorities. The second study analyzes how unaccompanied minors were framed in a more broad selection of Norwegian and Swedish official policy between 2000-2010 by looking at how unaccompanied children and youngsters were singled out as subjects of knowledge, and the actions and practices that legitimized these constructions.

These two case studies demonstrate that unaccompanied minors have been similarly problematized in Norway and Sweden, hence making similar changes in mode of conduct legitimate. They were sometimes singled out as vulnerable children or child victims, but concurrently also as possible strategic migrants (adults trying to pass as children, problematic youngsters, etc.). This poses different types of threats to the asylum system, thus justifying care-oriented amid control-oriented strategies in their regard.

The third case study analyzes how a selection of caregivers (i.e., officials and support staff) talk about their work with unaccompanied youngsters and children, and describes how 10 youngsters give meaning to their experiences of being categorized as unaccompanied. The caregivers held a repertoire of various constructions that clearly connect to many of the official or public narrations. Sometimes unaccompanied minors are framed as respectable exceptions to other problem categories, and at other times as problematic youngsters in need of compensatory pedagogics in order to overcome specific shortcomings. These caregivers, plus the media and national policy, further frame unaccompanied minors as specific rights holders due to their positioning as “any other child”, therefore legitimizing softer and more care-oriented strategies.

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The interviews with the 10 youngsters illustrate how they try to reposition themselves as positive exceptions to the official images of strategic or problematic youngsters highlighted in the media, policy and practice.

This study identifies a discourse where a lot of consensus and agreement on problematizations coexist in Norwegian and Swedish policy, public narratives, and in how people in the micro context talk and make sense of unaccompanied minors.

Keywords: unaccompanied children and minors, forced migration, Governmentality, programs of governing, discourse, media and policy analysis, intersectionality, comparative methods

Prologue

When the researcher presents the results from a long research process everything seems to fit so well together: every choice made enroute from the very first point of field entry through the entire process of data gathering and analysis is well reasoned and motivated, and always seemingly the ones exactly intended. In my point of view and experience such a research process narration is also very much a construction made in hindsight.

When I first started my PhD project in autumn 2005, my initial idea was to look at “trafficking” in a European comparative perspective. As a highly debated topic amongst NGOs within a wide range of political organizations and feminist groups (such as IOM, ILO, UNHCR, and European women’s liberation organizations), and different EU bodies working to fight human trafficking, trafficking seemed as a good point of reference to analyze how different meanings are brought about, negotiated or re-negotiated between different nations working to coordinate policy and practice. At this time, and as a gendered and age-related migration issue, trafficking was very much a so-called white spot, in other words much ignored by academic research. Since then many interesting studies have been conducted on trafficking by different scholars (e.g., Cf. O’Connell Davidson 2005; Aradau 2008; Brunovskis, Skilbrei and Tveit 2010; Brunovskis 2012). The end of 2005 was also a time when the Swedish media, quick and eager to connect such instances to the field of trafficking, highlighted narratives of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors missing from asylum reception centers in Sweden. A common speculation was that the entire Swedish asylum system was under attack from cruel and wicked traffickers utilizing it in order to bring unguarded children to and through Sweden.

The associations made between the instances of missing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and trafficking also served as a starting point to address the importance of more child friendly strategies within the asylum reception system. The speculations concerning unaccompanied minors as potential victims of trafficking made me want to understand whether or not this was a specifically a Swedish media narration or if similar speculations were analogously at the forefront in other countries, and what claims for action were made with regard to such matters.

Later, I hence conducted an extensive newspaper analysis that revealed how similar instances involving missing unaccompanied children were reported on in Norway (see Chapter 4). Similar storylines were also evident in Denmark and the UK, and although such instances were sometimes framed a

bit different (and not necessarily examples of children being trafficked), it soon became a popular point of view in order to highlight unaccompanied minors and their specific needs in the political agenda in Norway, as well as the UK and Denmark (Stretmo unpublished 2008).

Norway and Sweden struck me as the two countries in the sample that addressed the issue of missing minors in a similar fashion: the narratives of children vanishing or missing from official facilities were made much more explicit here than in the UK and Denmark and functioned as a means for different claimants to make strong calls for action with regard to the daily care of unaccompanied minors in the reception system. In fact, from 2000-2008, unaccompanied minors were rarely highlighted in Swedish or Norwegian newspapers unless the story also contained a reference to a missing asylum-seeking child or youngster.

Given that Swedish and Norwegian media stories could be said to mirror common public perceptions or Swedish and Norwegian common-sense beliefs (Cf. Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Brune 2006; 2008. Cf. Pickering 2008; Van Djik 2000, 2005), I found it interesting to critically deconstruct how such claims were answered or received — if at all — within the field of Norwegian and Swedish national policy, or how the reception of unaccompanied minors evolved from 2000-2010 in the two countries.

Although my point of entrance to the field of unaccompanied children and youngsters initially had been the missing children focus, what soon became clear was that between 2000-2010, the development of national strategies and/or action toward unaccompanied minors in both Sweden and Norway could be said to be its formative years. I then decided to broaden my research focus beyond the scope of the missing asylum-seeking children and inductively focus on the official articulation of a reception system aimed at unaccompanied minors. I was eager to analyze how the national responses came forth, how unaccompanied minors were conceptualized in them, and what kind of reception or action was hence deemed legitimate. Based on the extensive study of Swedish and Norwegian newspaper narratives of “missing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children” and the media’s call for action, it was interesting to study how policy development came into being in the two countries.

During the spring of 2010, I had the privilege to be asked to write an application for a research project along with the Research and Development department at the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR) (Forskning och utveckling/FoU i Väst)¹ and a two-year project was launched

¹ The GR is a cooperative organization uniting 13 municipalities in western Sweden. The member municipalities are Ale, Alingsås, Göteborg, Härryda, Kungsbacka, Kungälv, Lerum, Lilla Edet, Mölndal, Partille, Ste-

on the January 1, 2011.² This project, aiming to analyze the municipal reception of unaccompanied minors, gave me access to the sample of rather unique interview data that Charlotte Melander, PhD in Social Work (my co-worker), and I had compiled from interviews with 80 people involved in the daily care of unaccompanied minors, as well as 10 interviews with unaccompanied minors who were living in the GR. The interviews constitute interesting complements to the official or medial articulation of unaccompanied minors, as they illustrate how the people addressed by these official conceptualizations or framings came to make sense of them. How unaccompanied minors and the people working for and with them talk about themselves with reference to the media or official images offers further insights into the framing of unaccompanied minors at a national or media level, and to the influence, meanings and impact such official articulations give or have on and in peoples lives.

ningsund, Tjörn, and Öckerö. The association aims to promote networks, cooperation and the exchange of ideas between the different municipalities.

² The European Refugee Fund (ERF) funded the project labelled 'Unaccompanied minors in the Göteborg Region Association of Local Municipalities — support and everyday life'. Gryning Vård Ab (Sweden's largest company within homes for care and housing (HVB)) was project partner. The project was conducted between January 1, 2011 and finished by June 30, 2013. A full text version of the report can be found on FOU I Väst/GR's homepage:

http://www.grkom.se/download/18.415b48a314276a8b9a7d9ba/1387263282551/2013_far_jag_vara_med.pdf

Acknowledgment

For me conducting research and writing my thesis has also been a practice consisting of endless hours of staring at a computer screen, scanning through reports, books and articles, and formulating and re-formulating innumerable sentences until my back and shoulders have ached and my head has felt near explosion. It has also been about periods where writing at all has seemed rather impossible, alternated by thankful periods of rather frantic writing and creative thinking. It has also involved sleepless nights, where I have been awake in my bed during the long “hours of the wolf”, pondering my thesis, questioning my conduct and my abilities. Presented like this conducting a thesis is about mixed feelings and ambivalence, of hard and meticulous, and often very solitude work. Nonetheless, this process has also given me the possibility to meet and talk to inspiring people, participate in other projects and immerse and devote myself to a field of research I find interesting and important. Writing and doing research are also endeavors made bearable through the good help, necessary support and collaboration from others. In this section, my aim is to highlight some of the people that have made my particular journey possible and my life endurable along the way.

Many of the thoughts developed here and some of the central lines of reasoning would not have been formulated without the constructive guidance offered me from my two supervisors Ulla Björnberg and Håkan Thörn. While Ulla was part of my doctoral project from the very beginning and introduced me to the Centre for European Research at the University of Gothenburg (CERGU) and the Grace project group, Håkan became involved during the spring of 2007. Though the two of you have different angles of incidence, our joint discussions have always been constructive, creative and humorous. For helping me to sharpen my analytical tools, opening up a space where I could position myself with regard to our different discussions, for putting up with delayed draft versions, and for managing to find my project interesting when I have totally given up on it or doubted myself, I am forever grateful to you both!

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The time spent as part of the Grace project from 2005-2010 was another important and formative experience in order to find my own research path and articulate my project. Apart from Ulla B, Hans Andersson, Henry Ascher, Lotta Mellander, Marita Eastmond, Lisa Ottosson, and Malin Svensson were also part of Grace. A warm thanks to all of you!

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The department of Sociology and Work Science has been my workplace since September 2005, where draft versions of this text have been read, discussed and commented on, and where I had the opportunity to engage in theoretical and methodological discussions and position myself as a particular sociologist. I will hence give a collective thanks to all my collaborators there! A special thanks to Anna-Karin Wiberg for keeping track of teaching hours and the number of “care-of-sick-children days” and Gunilla Gustafsson for administrating the final publication process. The department of Sociology and Work Science has also been a space for shared laughs and good times: Christel Backman, Sofia Björk, Merete Hellum, Helena Holgersson, Mia Latta, Kristina Lowén Seldén, Karl Malmqvist, Danka Misevic, Anna Peixoto, Jesper Petersson, Sara Uhnöo, Patrik Vulkan, Cathrin Wasshede, and Åsa Wettergren: some of you are still my colleagues and friends I see regularly, while others have left the department to do other things or be in other places.

I will take this opportunity to once and for all let you know how fantastic you are, and that I consider myself lucky to have had the chance to get to know and work alongside you.

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1

Unaccompanied children in Sweden and Norway

In the beginning of Chapter 1, I intend to present my central objectives and the research questions set forth in this thesis before I give a textual outline of the structure of this book. Next, I will take a brief look at my research subject, the unaccompanied minor, by contextualizing unaccompanied children and youngsters in a Swedish and Norwegian context. As children, refugees and minors, unaccompanied children and youngsters are often put to the fore as a specific conundrum that I will connect to research pointing to how migration as such has been transformed into a security issue and some of the implications that this has on the official articulations. However, I will first provide a contextual background as to why a comparative study of the Norwegian and Swedish reception of unaccompanied minors is justified, and why an analysis of how youngsters and children categorized as unaccompanied minors and those working with and for them talk about their experiences, ultimately shedding deeper insights to this comparison.

Between the years 2000-2013, narratives featuring unaccompanied and asylum-seeking minors have been highlighted concurrently in both Norwegian and Swedish media. Though the storyline and focus have shifted a little during this 10-year period, the media lines have worked to raise awareness concerning the fates of unaccompanied asylum-seeking or refugee youngsters and minors. One such example is the demonstration on the Norwegian Eger-torget in February 2008, leading up to the Norwegian Minister of Children and Family Affairs being handed a petition signed by Norwegians demanding immediate action on the many unaccompanied minors who had gone missing from reception centers in Norway (Dagbladet 08.01.24; Aftenposten 08.02.10; Verdens Gang: 08.02.26).

The situation of unaccompanied minors has also been addressed at the national and EU level, as children migrating alone are considered as a group of especially vulnerable refugees in need of extra protection (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007; Stretmo 2010; Eastmond and Ascher 2011; Watters

2012). This process points to what scholars refer to as one of the many consequences of “the securitization of migration” (Cf. Abiri 2000; Huysman 2000, 2006), a process wherein the public views migrants and asylum seekers as security threats, or as potential burdens to national welfare, and as challenges to national identity (Cf. Pickering 2001; 2008). This has been underpinned by a toughening of asylum rights and migration policies (Hansen 2008; Lemberg-Pedersen 2011; Barker 2013). As migration and migrants have been transformed into a security issue, and henceforth objects and subjects of rigid control and regulation, the singling out of the most vulnerable has become imperative in a political context where a reduction of asylum applications are seen as desirable (Cf. Hansen 2008; Vitus 2011). In the era of harmonization, coordination and cooperation amongst EU member states in the areas of asylum and migration, the handling of unaccompanied minors is considered a joint challenge between different EU member states (Cf. Lundberg and Söderman 2010). Different claims-makers (e.g., Save the Children Alliance, ECPAT³, UNICEF) have also been working to ensure that European authorities take care of unaccompanied minors according to their specific needs as children separated from their next of kin, as underage migrants seeking asylum on their own, and in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Although different EU members are committed by the same regulations and policies to offer children and minors a child friendlier reception, there clearly consist various ways in which the countries endeavor to do so in practice. According to NGOs and human rights organizations, Maltese, Greek and Italian border police have put unaccompanied children in detention with adults, and they are accused of physically abusing them. Furthermore, unaccompanied minors are forced to get by as street children, living roughly in suburban areas of Malta, Italy and Greece (Lundberg and Söderberg 2010; Lemberg-Pedersen 2011). In the UK and Denmark, unaccompanied children and youngsters have been given a temporary stay until they turn 18, when they are expected to return to their country of origin (Watters 2008; Vitus 2011). Derleuyn and Broekaert (2005) illustrate the length to which, for instance, Belgian border police go to avoid receiving asylum claims and hence also asylum seekers in the first place, revealing very little or no information on exactly where to apply for asylum or how to get there when engaging newly arrived migrants (Cf. Watters 2007).

³ ECPAT is an NGO working to raise public awareness of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children globally. The abbreviation stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography And Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (see e.g., www.ecpat.se).

As an EU member, Sweden is obliged to participate in the construction of a joint market but also in its common borders, protecting this market from third country nationals. The open and free scheme of capital, goods, service, and people within the EU market is also connected to a restricted scheme of closed frontiers, border controls, joint intelligence, and police cooperation that is protecting the inner market (Cf. Hansen 2008). On the other hand, Norway has decided not to become an EU member, but rather ratify the Schengen Agreement, the Dublin convention and to participate in the organization of a joint border control system. Norway and Sweden have hence adopted two, and in some ways rather different, angles of incidence to the common market. Yet, both countries are also the two amongst the Nordic cluster that often are pointed out by international welfare research as archetypical examples of the social democratic Nordic welfare state model (Esping Anderssen 1990, 1999; Schierup, Castles and Hansen 2006; Larsson, Letell and Thörn, eds. 2012). Furthermore, Norway and Sweden have adopted what can be described as particularly child- or family-oriented state policies (Cf. Eastmond and Ascher 2011 for a discussion on Sweden and Norway's self-image as particularly child friendly countries). Nevertheless, some differences between Norway and Sweden exist: while Norway has decided to incorporate the UNCRC as part of its law, Sweden has decided not to.

According to Lundberg (2010), the best interests of the child enshrined in the UNCRC Article 3 is an overarching principle that should permeate all aspects of the asylum process affecting children, "But (as) this principle is vague in nature (it) should (hence) be balanced against other societal interests, such as the interest of maintaining a regulated migration" (Lundberg 2010. My translation, Cf. Lundberg 2011.) A comparative study conducted by Vitus (2011) argues that a Danish decision not to incorporate the UNCRC as part of Danish legislation has framed refugee minors (whether accompanied or not) applying for asylum in Denmark as first and foremost asylum seekers rather than children, hence legitimizing taking restrictive measures. Vitus's analysis furthermore suggests that the Norwegian choice to incorporate the UNCRC has highlighted refugee children's status as children and minors to a greater extent in Norwegian practice. The comparison between Norway and Denmark indicates that perception matters, as children applying for asylum as either a migrant and/or a child legitimizes different kinds of actions. The study indicates that interesting differences operate between Nordic welfare states, affecting the area of migration and migrants' rights. The choice to incorporate the UNCRC or not makes Norway and Sweden interesting cases to compare and analyze how unaccompanied children and

minors become valued in policy and practice, but also how they are transformed into a specific and governable space.

As the rights of unaccompanied children have been much debated in both Norway and Sweden, different calls for action made in the media have also questioned the entire organizational mode of conduct of the reception system, and strong claims of child neglect have been made in this regard in both countries. When a social problem is concurrently highlighted and calls for reformations are accordingly made (a process of problematization), it often becomes justified, necessary and legitimate to change the system that is under attack (Cf. Thörn 2006). From 2000-2010, the Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) and the Norwegian board of Immigration (UDI) received an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Their official responses were two-fold: on the one hand, some steps have been made in order to ensure a decrease in the number of asylum applications from unaccompanied minors (such as the implementation of a biometrical age testing system in the Norwegian context). On the other hand, policies have also been articulated to safeguard the best interest of asylum-seeking children and youngsters that do arrive, as well as dividing the “control and regulative functions” (which I define as practices such as the investigation of the asylum claim, singling out individuals that are given the right to reside) versus the “care functions” (the activities that aim to give care such as conducting follow-ups, assist, integrate, and offer unaccompanied minors care and housing according to their special needs as underage subjects). There seemingly consist a double-bind in the Swedish and Norwegian reception of unaccompanied minors: on the one hand, they are conceived as asylum seekers whose rights to reside in either country is dependent on the Norwegian UDI or Swedish Migration Board’s decisions, and on the other hand they are children with the right to an optimal development and integration, proper schooling and care.

Since July 1, 2006, the Swedish Migration Board is no longer in charge of handling both the investigation of asylum claims (control and regulative functions) and the daily care and housing (part of what I label care functions). These responsibilities have instead become divided between the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), or the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL), and the Swedish Migration Board, respectively. In Norway a similar development took place during 2007. This transference of responsibilities (“a process of responsabilization” Cf. Rose 1999/2008) was initially aimed at the group of unaccompanied children under the age of 15 who became the responsibility of Bufetat (Norwegian Children, Youth and Family Directorate), but it was also intended to include the group

of unaccompanied minors between the ages of 15-17 on arrival at a later stage. The Norwegian and Swedish processes resulted in the articulation of a specific reception system for unaccompanied minors, where the handling of the asylum claim is primarily conducted by authorities different from the ones in charge of giving care and monitoring the day-to-day life and well-being of the children and minors. Apart from the handling of the asylum claim, which is still conducted by the Swedish Migration Board and UDI, respectively, the part of the reception system aiming to provide care has comprised various municipal/regional actors such as social workers, teachers, healthcare professionals, guardians or custodians⁴, but also publicly and privately operated home for care and housing (HVB) facilities and different foster homes. All are engaged in the care of unaccompanied minors during their entire asylum process, and beyond when and if they are given the right to reside in either Norway or Sweden.

The implementation of this new scheme into practice turned out to be much more difficult than the policymakers and authorities in Sweden and in Norway had first anticipated. As of today (spring 2014), the transference of responsibility from the Norwegian UDI to the social services has not yet been effectuated for unaccompanied youngsters above 15 years of age who still reside in special group home facilities under the supervision of the UDI during their asylum process (Lidén 2013). In the Swedish media, many local municipalities are described as highly reluctant to take delivery of unaccompanied minors (Aftonbladet 2009a, 2009b, 2014; DN 2013a, 2013b), and the municipalities (or *ankomstkommunerna*) hosting reception centers as filled to capacity because of this. How to go about putting the new division of labour into the reception system is hence a conundrum, as responsibilities are often described or experienced as overriding. Furthermore, it is framed as not wholly understood whether, if and how the Swedish municipalities would get their expenses covered by the Swedish Migration Board (Cf. Ibid).

The articulations of novel reception systems from 2000-2010, along with other important policy changes on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and refugees, make Norway and Sweden interesting cases to analyze and compare. This course of action highlights how the reception of unaccompanied minors (the system as such) become evaluated, improved and reformed, yet also how this process often comes to enhance more regulation and organization of the subject at hand (i.e., unaccompanied minors).

⁴ In Norwegian practice unaccompanied minors are appointed a guardian during their asylum process. If they are offered a permanent stay in Norway and if the parents cannot be traced, a legal guardian is appointed them at a later stage. In Sweden, the unaccompanied child is appointed a custodian during the asylum process, but they will be appointed a specially appointed custodian if allowed permanent stay.

What also becomes evident is how the national solutions to one problem risks leading to new unanticipated and unpredicted complications, as the translation of national strategies and ideas into practice is not always a straightforward path nor easy to predict (see also Miller and Rose 2008). The invention of a governable space, for instance the launching of a new reception system, illustrates how the official responses are transported through and translated at various levels of society.

1.1 Aims and research questions

In this thesis, my central objective is to analyze how unaccompanied minors have been constructed and governed as a specific group of refugees in Norway and Sweden. Part of this is also to study how a selection of children and youngsters categorized as unaccompanied minors talk about and make sense of their experiences, and how a selection of caregivers working with and for them talks about managing or governing them in light of these official articulations. This is done through three different case studies. In the first study, I analyze the Norwegian and Swedish media debate from 2000-2008 by examining specific critical discursive moments, when incidences of so-called missing unaccompanied children have been highlighted in the media. Part of this is also to analyze the specific official action taken by Norwegian and Swedish authorities. The second study aims to analyze how unaccompanied minors were framed in Norwegian and Swedish official policy from 2000-2010 by looking into how unaccompanied children and youngsters were put to the fore as a specific subject of knowledge, and the specific actions and practices (responsibilization strategies, conduct and changes in mode of conduct) that were legitimized through such conceptions. In the third case study, I investigate how a selection of caregivers (officials and support staff) talk about their work with unaccompanied youngsters and children, and how 10 youngsters categorized as unaccompanied minors talk about and give meaning to their experiences of coming to Sweden as unaccompanied.

1.1.1 Research questions set forth in this thesis

- How are unaccompanied minors constructed in the daily press and national policies in Norway and Sweden?
- How do different caregivers (officials and support staff) involved in the Swedish reception system talk about managing and/or governing unaccompanied minors?
- How do children and youngsters with the experience of being categorized as “unaccompanied minors” talk about themselves and their experiences?

1.2 The textual outline of the thesis

In the introduction to Chapter 1, I pointed to some general features of how unaccompanied minors have been perceived and debated in Norwegian and Swedish media, and to some radical system changes that have occurred during the last decade at the national and EU levels that I argue make Norway and Sweden interesting cases to analyze in this regard. In the following (sections 1.3 and 1.4), I aim to highlight how unaccompanied minors and child migration have been framed historically, but also contextualize children’s migrations in a European context before I provide some statistical insights to unaccompanied minors in Norway and Sweden. In section 1.5, I will then turn to previously conducted research on unaccompanied minors, focusing on studies conducted on unaccompanied minors and refugee children in the Swedish and Norwegian context. Finally, I will position myself in relation to the body of previously conducted research. In Chapter 2, I will present the analytical and methodological framework that will enable me to analyze my empirical data such as discourse theory, governmentality, media’s role in the construction of social problems, and the intersectional lens. Whereas some methodological implications will be discussed during the theoretical passage of Chapter 2, in Chapter 3 I will give a more in-depth description of how I worked to sample and analyze my different research data and ethical considerations.

In Chapters 4-8, I will present my empirical analysis. In Chapter 4, ‘The missing child – media narratives and national problematizations’, I will look into how stories of unaccompanied minors missing from refugee centers were emphasized in Swedish and Norwegian newspapers but also how such narratives were concurrently stressed and addressed in Swedish and Norwegian policies (if at all), and some of the responses that were made in this regard. In

Chapter 5, ‘The vulnerable child, ambivalent teen and strategic adult’, I will focus on how Swedish and Norwegian national policies talk and construct age with regard to unaccompanied minors. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, I will present my case study encompassing interview data. In Chapter 6, ‘Care workers talk about unaccompanied minors’, I analyze how officials and support staff position unaccompanied children and youngsters as specific subjects of knowledge. In Chapter 7, ‘Working with unaccompanied minors’, I analyze the kind of work these conceptualizations legitimize. In Chapter 8, ‘How to pass as an respectable refugee’, I will look into how 10 girls and boys categorized as unaccompanied talked about their everyday life and how they position themselves or present themselves as respectable with regard to popular representations of unaccompanied minors. In Chapter 9, ‘Unaccompanied minors in media, policy and practice’, I will summarize my main findings and discuss some of the implications and consequences that are put to the fore in the analysis of policy and media, and talk concerning unaccompanied minors and children in a Norwegian and Swedish context.

1.3 Children migrating on their own

As there are numerous tales in popular culture of abandoned or orphaned children striving to make a better life for themselves somewhere else (ranging from the movie *The Godfather 2* to the Swedish children’s book “*Den långa långa resan*” (“*The Long Journey*”) by Ilon Wikland, 1995), and even in some of the more classic narratives such as the folktale of Hansel and Gretel (see e.g., Eide 2005; Eide et al. 2012) and the Classical Greek myth of Phrixus and Helle,⁵ unaccompanied child migration per se is sometimes put to the fore as a completely new issue or phenomenon.

Still, there are also many historic examples of groups of children and youngsters who have more or less willingly or by force been made to migrate by themselves in order to escape famine and extreme poverty, war and political turmoil. Amongst the many Swedish and Norwegian emigrants during the

⁵ The myth of Phrixus and Helle and the folktale of Hansel and Gretel are two quite similar storylines highlighting the fates of brothers and sisters forced to flee. Riding on the back of a flying golden stag eventually saves Phrixus and Helle, when their evil stepmother intends to make human sacrifices of them. Hansel and Gretel’s stepmother abandons them in a dark forest, where the two children become enslaved by a wicked and cannibalistic witch living in a candy house. While Helle falls off the stags back and drowns in the sea below, Phrixus finds a safe haven in Colchis and even marries the king’s daughter there. Hansel and Gretel, on the other hand, conquer the witch by outwitting her, steal all her gold and return to their father (the stepmother now having deceased), on the back of a swan, to live happily ever after.

19th century were teenage boys and girls who made their journey across the Atlantic hoping to make a living in the promised land of the USA. Other examples involve Jewish children that were sent to Sweden and Norway in order to escape the Nazis during the late 1930s (Eide 2005) or the 75,000 Finnish children (Finnebarnen) evacuated to primarily Sweden, but also to Norway and Denmark, to escape the harsh conditions in their homeland from 1930-1944 (Elmeroth och Häge 2009: 49f, see e.g., Bak and von Brömssen 2013). During the post-war period many children and youngsters that by today's standards would be categorized as "unaccompanied minors" migrated together with extended family members or came as part of family reunions to live with kinsmen who had resettled in Norway or Sweden either as labour migrants or because they had obtained refugee status there. (Backlund et al. 2012. See e.g., Schierup, Castles and Hansen 2006, for a thorough description of migrations flows and patterns in a post-war European context). Many urban municipalities in Norway and Sweden have an extended experience of handling unaccompanied minors and youngsters because they have received children living with their extended families. One such example is the urban municipality of Rinkeby, Stockholm, which in 2001 published a handbook specifically aimed at social workers in order to help them investigate and do follow-ups on unaccompanied minors placed in so-called kinship foster families (Cf. Andersson 2001). Another example is a parallel manual made by UDI, inspired by the work in Swedish Rinkeby, to construct some similar guidelines in the Norwegian context (UDI 2003: 3).

These historical and contextual incidences, as well as representations found in popular culture and in some of the classical storylines mentioned here, shows us that images of unaccompanied minors are seemingly embedded within historical narratives and folklore, and could hence also be said to embody a specific place in popular thought.

1.3.1 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND CHILDREN – A DEFINITION

Unaccompanied children (enslig mindreårigt barn and ensamkommande barn, which is the official Norwegian and Swedish terms, respectively) is used in agreement with international conventions and comprises all migrating individuals under the age of 18 that arrive in Sweden and Norway by themselves in order to apply for asylum there. A child that arrives with parents or a custodian later to be abandoned by them after arrival is also categorized as a unaccompanied child. Sometimes unaccompanied children arrive in Sweden or Norway with extended family members, friends, siblings, or with their

own small babies, a wife or a husband, and sometimes by themselves. For many unaccompanied minors the conditions that made them decide to flee or migrate might also have changed dramatically during the time of flight. They could, for instance, have started off their migration with others, later to have lost or gotten estranged from their loved ones enroute (Stretmo and Melander 2013. Cf Ayotte 2000; Eide 2005; Watters 2008; Brunnberg 2011; Backlund 2012; Lidén 2013). According to the UNCRC (and hence in accordance also Swedish and Norwegian immigration policy) unaccompanied children and youngsters have, due to their status of being unaccompanied or separated, a right to a quicker asylum process and proper housing (usually in some sort of home or care and housing facility with other children or youths, a foster family or maybe a home together with relatives). Furthermore, they have the right to a custodian or guardian, to healthcare and good schooling. (Elmeroth and Häge 2009: 49f, Bufetat 2013: UDI 2013; Migrationsverket 2013; and Socialstyrelsen 2013a; 2013b).

In this thesis, I decided to use the concepts unaccompanied children, unaccompanied youngsters, and the more internationally used concept unaccompanied minors interchangeably. This is done in order to highlight that as a child the unaccompanied subject is entitled to be treated differently than the adult subject, but also in order not to homogenize the rather heterogeneous group of subjects categorized as unaccompanied children.

1.4 Unaccompanied minors in the context of European asylum discourse and practice

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, refugee children and youngsters (whether unaccompanied or not) constitute a “double exposure” with regard to national responses: on the one hand, they are considered as special rights holders due to their position as children, but on the other hand they are also considered migrants. As migrants, refugee and asylum-seeking children are subject to asylum regulations and policies, and they risk deportation if their claim for asylum is rejected.

The effect of the securitization of migration points to how a focus on border control and intelligence has run in parallel to a plethora of new laws and policies aiming to regulate the movements of migrants and asylum seekers (Huysman 2000; Watters 2008:63f). The joint European machinery to detect or expel migrants trying to cross Europe’s external borders furthermore includes the use of X-rays in order to detect people hidden in trucks. It includes: age-assessing asylum seekers; constructing razor-sharp fences in

order to protect borderlands; and fining trucking and shipping companies when and if so-called illegal migrants are detected in their cargo, which includes detaining or deporting them. (Cf. Fassin 2001, 2005; Watters 2007; 2008). Such conduct comprises what Lemberg-Pedersen (2011) argue is an externalization of migrants and asylum seekers, where asylum camps are built on premises outside of Europe and where third countries are aided economically in order to prevent would-be migrants from ever entering Europe. Concordantly, most Western industrialized countries do not accept visas from people originating from some of the most conflict-ridden areas and regions of the world (Neumeyer 2006), thus making illegal entry the only means of entry for those originating from these countries.

The fight to combat what is categorized as irregular or illegal migration, or to avoid receiving asylum seekers, is also paralleled by a focus on aiding the groups considered the most deserved. This point to what Watters (2007) argues is an example of classical societal values with regard to who should be considered as the legitimate versus illegitimate receiver of social contributions and support (Cf. Pinson, Arnot and Candappa 2010). Thomson's (1971) notion of a "moral economy" is traceable to the 16th century, when distinctions were made between subjects considered the undeserving versus deserving poor. The undeserving were those identified as able-bodied who for some (incomprehensible) reason (idleness or lack of character) refused to work, whereas the deserving could become the legitimate recipients of handouts. In this case, the legitimate or deserving migrants are those who are eligible for protection and care, in other words subjects sometimes labeled "genuine refugees" or "real victims" (Cf. O'Connell Davidson 2006; Hansen 2008). The illegitimates, on the contrary, are those migrants, smuggled individuals or asylum seekers believed to be bogus and hence found to be undeserving. When applying these traditional parameters of legitimacy, on the case of refugees or migrants in general and unaccompanied children specifically, Watters (2007) argue that the parameters might not be reflective of the traditional distinctions between deserving and undeserving, as more widely held social outlooks toward asylum seekers and refugees have also been influenced by a hostile media climate framing most migrants and migration as rather problematic (Ibid, Cf. Pickering 2001 for similar lines of argumentation; Cf. Brune 2008; SOU 2006 for comparable findings in a Swedish context). This hostility is sometimes referred to as the "climate of mistrust" (Finch 2005), where refugees or asylum seekers are perceived as making "illegitimate and cynical attempts to pursue claims and gain access to a wide range of welfare benefits" (Watters 2007: 396. Cf. Valentine and Knudsen 1995; Andersson et al. 2010). Kohli (2006; 2007) demonstrates how, for

instance, social workers sometimes find it difficult to distinguish their role as the investigator of an unaccompanied child or young person's needs from the scrutiny of the same child's asylum claim. In the UK, for example, social services employees have specific obligations to provide the Home Office (Britain's equivalent to the UDI and Swedish Migration Board) with information that can lead them to mistrust or question the stories given by unaccompanied children. The climate of mistrust is also comparable to what at times is described as a shift in the public migration discourse from a discussion on refugees to one on asylum seekers, thus disputing their legitimacy as possible refugees (Cf. Fassin 2001, 2005; Watters 2008).⁶

1.4.1 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AS A POLITICAL CONUNDRUM IN NORWAY AND SWEDEN

In his thesis, Eide (2005) analyzes four different cohorts of children and youngsters who applied for asylum in Norway from about 1940 until the late 90s. Eide's (Ibid) analysis concerns the life histories, identity formation, and how the different groups of migrant children look at and give meaning to their migration experiences and life in Norway. Emphasized in this regard is how Norwegian society in different periods during the 20th century came to interpret and construct groups of children who came as refugees without the support of their immediate family members. Eide (2005) argues that unaccompanied children have constituted social/welfare dilemmas that Norwegian society has been forced to respond to or try to resolve. Eide (2005) has explored the different reception systems or care regimes that have been legitimized in Norwegian official interpretations during the four different epochs, and how unaccompanied children narrate their experiences of this reception. Highlighted in Eide's study is how the various official conceptualizations tend to reappear and lead to the same types of actions taken. Similar studies conducted by Engebriksen (2002) and Stretmo (2010) analyze Norwegian and Swedish officials' ideas with regard to the reception of unaccompanied minors. One such popular representation is that of unaccompanied minors as so-called anchor children, sent off by parents hoping to be able to obtain a residence permit in Sweden or Norway on the grounds of family unification, leading to restrictive measures of the possibility of unaccompanied minors to

⁶ The climate of mistrust is evident in a variety of practices. With regard to the statistics on unaccompanied minors made available by the Eurostat (2014a and 20014b), it is interesting to see how the statistical table is itself labeled: "Asylum applicants *considered* to be unaccompanied minors" (my emphasis), hence indicating that the status of the subjects categorized there could in some way be disputable.

be reunited with their parents in the new country of residence. Stretmo (2010) underlines how Norwegian and Swedish constructions of unaccompanied minors as either a vulnerable victim in the hands of calculating parents or themselves as potentially strategic migrants legitimizes restrictive policy measures. What is evident is that child migration is treated as an anomaly, and that this view risks coloring the official conceptualization of unaccompanied children and youngsters.

Having not examined official constructions of unaccompanied minors as such, Lundberg (2009; 2013) instead analyzed how migration board officers use the principle of the best interest of the child with regard to asylum claims made by unaccompanied minors. According to her the principle of best interest is found to be problematic, as it is a rather open and vague concept. Clarifications are most often done by adults who act as interpreters on behalf of children and youngsters (Cf. Socialstyrelsen 2013). The definitions of children's needs and/or the best interests of the child are henceforth constructs that are channeled through the gaze of adults (see e.g., Stretmo and Melander 2013 for similar lines of reasoning of custodians and how they talk about a child perspective; Cf. Socialstyrelsen 2013). Lundberg (2013) stresses how the best interest of the child concept sometimes can even be used in a negative way to legitimize specific actions that could otherwise be deemed as rather jeopardizing from or to a child sensitive point of view. Lundberg (2009, 2013) demonstrates that Swedish migration board officers often use the best interest of the child principle in order to legitimize rejections of unaccompanied children's asylum applications. By stating that the rejection does not coincide with the best interest of the child, the Swedish Migration Board mode of conduct can go on without being questioned further. The child perspective is rarely given any concrete or absolute significance.

1.4.2 UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN IN NORWAY AND SWEDEN – FACTS AND FIGURES

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), child migrants represent nearly half of the total of approximately 40 million refugees that are of concern to the UNHCR (2014a). In this regard it is important to underline that most of the world's refugees consist as internally displaced people, which implies that they have been forced to flee their region of origin, their homes and families, later to end up in the slum parts of urban cities or sometimes as refugees in refugee camps in their neighboring countries (UNHCR 2014b; Watters 2008; Elmeroth och Häge 2009). In order to understand migrations or patterns of migration, it is important to understand

how historical and structural patterns cooperate and interact. Today's global migration may be a consequence of how historical processes such as colonialism have created immense economical and structural inequalities between different countries and regions of the world (Watters 2008; Eide et al. 2012). It is hence also important to bring to mind that only a small fraction of the world's refugees ever find their way to Europe or Norway and Sweden.

Although Swedish and Norwegian societies have historically dealt with cases of what we today would think of as unaccompanied minors, comparable statistics on unaccompanied minors are of a more recent origin. Still, some data on unaccompanied child migration before 2000 are available. At the beginning of the 1990s, Sweden received more refugees from the Balkans than any other Nordic country, and amongst those refugees many unaccompanied minors. In 1995, approximately 1,500 unaccompanied children and youngsters applied for asylum in Sweden, a number that was to decrease in subsequent years (Stretmo and Melander 2013; Socialstyrelsen 2013). From 1990-2000, the number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Norway fluctuated annually (Eide and Broch, 2010: 15f), but from 2000-2005 it was Norway that became the country amongst its Nordic neighbors that received the most unaccompanied minors, the vast majority of children originating from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Sri Lanka (Eide and Broch 2010: 18). While Norway from 2000-2003 received asylum applications from more than 500 children and youngsters yearly, a total of 300-400 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum per year in neighboring Sweden, most of them originating from Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Eritrea (UDI 2012; Migrationsverket 2013). In 2004, nearly 1,000 children and youngsters applied for asylum in Norway, a number that dropped remarkably in 2005, the year Norway also chose to introduce standardized "biometrical age-assessment tests". In Sweden, the number of unaccompanied children started to increase in 2006 (when a total of 861 unaccompanied boys and girls applied for asylum) up until October 2013, when a total of 3,111 children and youngsters applied for asylum. In Norway, the number of applications increased between 2008 (approximately 500 applications) until the number peaked again during 2010 (about 2,500 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum), and suddenly dropped by 2011 when 1,250 children and youngsters applied for asylum (UDI 2012). Approximately 1,000 unaccompanied minors have applied for asylum in Norway during 2012 and 2013 respectively (UDI 2014). While the number of asylum applications from unaccompanied minors in both Norway and Sweden are rather high in comparison to other EU countries, Sweden was the country amongst the EU 28 that received the most unaccompanied minors in 2013 (Eurostat 2014a).

Although the number of individual unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in Sweden and Norway fluctuates according to national statistics, the majority of unaccompanied children and youngsters that in total do arrive in these two countries are often described as boys between 15-18 years of age (Eurostat 2014b; Broch and Eide 2010: 43f; Swedish Migration Board 2009b, 2009c, 2014). Nevertheless, in the local context of different Norwegian or Swedish municipalities, the gender and age composition of unaccompanied minors can differ. For instance, among the total amount of 154 children and youth that arrived in the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR) in 2008, 70 percent were boys and 30 percent were girls (hence imaging the national composition). Of the 80 children that settled in Gothenburg, nearly 45 percent were girls. In the GR at large (consisting of 13 different municipalities) 40 percent were under the age of 15 and whereas the majority of these minors had their origin in Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan, nearly 20 percent of the children originated from a total of 15 different countries (Stretmo and Melander 2013).

Although the number of asylum applications differs in Norway and Sweden, as well as in many other European countries, their specific situation and their well-being has concerned many NGOs who actively work in favor of children's rights over the last 13 years (O'Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007; Watters 2008; Lemberg-Pedersen 2011; Eastmond and Ascher 2011). As stated earlier, the perception of unaccompanied minors has also been that of a "hot potato" in the debate concerning migration at large: As the unaccompanied minor subject on the one hand and as a migrant comes on collision course with any given states supreme right to decide whom is to reside on its territory and on the other as a child concurrently also is positioned as a subject upholding specific rights (Cf. Vitus 2011). This points to a double positioning of refugee children, but also to the conundrum that refugees and asylum seekers seem to constitute in the European context. It is against the backdrop of rather restrictive migration policies concerning asylum rights that unaccompanied children and youngsters apply for asylum in Norway and Sweden.

1.5 Unaccompanied minors and the politics of belonging

Within the field of sociology, research focusing on children's migration experiences is still rather sparse, but is concurrently becoming a growing interest to sociologists and social workers. Traditionally, the literature highlighting children's migration has concentrated on the conditions of unaccompanied children, either from a point of view wherein their extra vulnerable

situation is put to the fore or as constituting a particularly exposed group amongst other refugees and asylum seekers (Cf. O’Connell Davidson and Farrow, 2007; Wernesjö 2011; Eide and Broch 2010; Eide et al. 2012 for similar lines of reasoning). The research on unaccompanied minors have furthermore had three main angles of incidence. Firstly, a paediatric and/or psychological tradition focusing on how they handle and/or process traumas and painful experiences (Wallin and Ahlström 2005; Hultmann 2008). Secondly, a more legally-oriented framework concentrating on the enforcement of the rights of the child amid national policy and practice (see e.g., Connelly 2011; Lundberg 2010, 2011). Thirdly, as a body of interdisciplinary migration studies focusing on the reception system of unaccompanied minors and trying to explain why children migrate (Ayotte 2000; Eide 2005; 2010; Eide et al. 2010; Watters 2008; Kohli 2006; 2007; Backlund et al. 2012; Stretmo and Melander 2013). Literature and research looking at unaccompanied minors from a point of view of where the child is interpreted as an agent, actively trying to get by in a novel context, is also a fourth and growing field of contemporary research.

In the following I will highlight some of these studies.

1.5.1 A CRITIQUE OF A ONE-SIDED FOCUS IN THE STUDY OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

The more psychologically-oriented research on unaccompanied minors have been criticized for providing too little insight and limited knowledge of the daily lives of unaccompanied minors (and of refugee children in general) prior to their migration but also of their everyday life strategies in the novel host country. According to Kohli (2006, 2007), this leads to a one-dimensional narrative of unaccompanied minors leading to us not seeing them as normal children in everyday situations and contexts. Instead, unaccompanied minors and children risks being “othered” as vulnerable or “different children” (with different experiences), as the British adult society may find it difficult to relate to them compared to other children (Kohli and Mitchell 2007; Kohli 2006, 2007. Cf. O’Connell Davidson and Farrow, 2007; see also Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis). This also corresponds to what Engbrigsten (2002; 2012) argues is a view of unaccompanied minors as subjects positioned outside of childhood, as some of the children and youngsters’ possible experiences — separated at an early age, working instead of playing or going to school, surviving rather traumatic ordeals — are considered as opposing the very notion of children and healthy or normal childhoods implicitly held by many officials and support staff. The unaccompanied minor

subject hence consists as “a matter out of place” (Ibid: 18). Furthermore, O’Connell Davidson and Farrow (2007) argue that researchers need to be more attentive to the fact that migrant or refugee children are not merely victims in or of their situations, and that migration can lead to positive outcomes for a child, hence questioning the problem orientation of many classical studies on migrants in general and migrant children particularly (Cf. Waters 2008).

Wernesjö (2011: 504f) further argues that a one-sided focus on the possible emotional problems and vulnerability of unaccompanied minors also risks to render invisible the structural conditions under which children and young people find themselves. The impact of asylum regulations that I have discussed in the previous section, but also xenophobia, racism and/or social exclusion in everyday life, give different unaccompanied children and youngsters rather diverse possibilities in order to be integrated and continue their lives in a new country (Cf Fangen, Johansson and Hammarén 2011). A study conducted by Shina (2008) illustrates how the different legal statuses of people with migrant backgrounds work to construct a system of division or stratification between groups of migrants living in Britain.⁷ Many unaccompanied and asylum-seeking minors report on having experienced racism, both from White Britons but also from Britons with migrant backgrounds (see e.g., Back 2005 for a discussion on what Back labels “the new face of racism”). According to Pinson, Arnot and Candappa (2010), refugee and asylum-seeking children talk about experiences of “exclusion within (the arenas of) inclusion” such as being bullied in school and having trouble making new friends. (Ibid: 151-154). These studies point to the everyday life experiences of unaccompanied minors and the sense of belonging (Cf. Yuval Davies 2012) that they can achieve in a new context. Though “the longing to belong and the feeling that you belong somewhere are important emotional dimensions” (Wernesjö 2014: 40), “belonginess” as such is not a priori given: the unaccompanied, refugee and asylum-seeking children and youngsters’ claim to belong endangers being challenged by others ascribing them a subordinated or even stigmatized positioning (Ibid; Pinson, Arnot and Candappa 2010. Cf. Alinia 2004; Yuval Davies 2012).

A focus on the resources and capabilities of unaccompanied minors should hence be advocated (see e.g., Kohli 2007 and Kohli and Mitchell 2007

⁷ In Britain, the majority of unaccompanied minors who claim asylum there do not obtain a permanent residence permit, instead they receive a so-called temporary permit and are expected to return to their country of origin when turning 18 years of age. Many unaccompanied minors instead choose to stay on as undocumented migrants after they have turned 18 (see e.g., Shina 2008).

and Watters 2008) alongside an understanding of what being a child in a specific situation implies. As unaccompanied minors, children's freedom is quite limited, as they are often dependent on adults, and as migrants they are also in the hands of what can be analyzed as rather capricious asylum systems (see e.g., Engebriksen 2002; Eide et al. 2012 for similar lines of argumentation).

There is concurrently a consensus in some of the studies mentioned above on unaccompanied minors and refugee children stating the importance of understanding how previous experiences alongside the position of being a minor asylum-seeker, risk endangering the wellbeing of unaccompanied children and youngsters. Simultaneously, these studies also point to the importance of not constructing unaccompanied minors as a specific group of victims despite their vulnerable position as migrants (see Huemer et al. 2009; Derluyn and Broekaert 2007; Oppedal et al. 2008; Eide and Broch 2010: 50; Brunberg et al. 2012; Bengtsson and Ruud. Cf. Andersson et al. 2005; 2010 for similar findings with regard to refugee children).

1.5.2 UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND YOUNGSTERS – GETTING BY IN THE NORWEGIAN AND SWEDISH CONTEXT

Although Swedish and Norwegian research on unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children and youngsters can also be classified within the three types of the traditional focus that characterizes the international research, many studies have concurrently tried to balance these perspectives by aiming to accentuate the different daily life experiences of children arriving in the two countries unaccompanied.

Much of the contemporary research conducted in Sweden and Norway on unaccompanied minors concerns their everyday life in the host country, their situation and well-being (psychological distress versus comfort and security) in a novel context with regard to important relationships, school and housing, and how they seem to manage or settle in the long run (follow-ups). In this section, I will provide a short introduction to some of these findings with a specific emphasis on research concerning unaccompanied and migrant children's school experiences.

Some key contributions to the knowledge base on unaccompanied children include Brändler (2004), Gunnarsson (2008), Wallin and Ahlström (2005), Nilsson (2010), and Hessle (2009) studies pointing to how unaccompanied children in general seem resettled in the long term and appear to integrate into Swedish society, but that it is important for their health and well-

being that they are supported in maintaining contact with their loved ones in their home countries or in other places of the world (transnationalism) (Cf. Watters 2008; 2012 and Kohli 2006; 2007). Engebrigtsen (2002) suggests that unaccompanied children and youngsters continue to act as responsible members of their families even after being resettled abroad. Stretmo and Melander (2013) argue that while unaccompanied minors often narrate a feeling of being obliged to contribute to their parents and siblings abroad, officials and support staff involved in the reception of them constructs this as examples of parents putting too much pressure on their offspring. Ibid and Engebrigsten (2002; 2012) argue that officials and support staff frame the parents as subjects who lack insight and consideration into their children's situation in Sweden and Norway, as children have limited economical resources and possibilities to earn money. Officials and support staff consequently advocate the importance of simply informing parents of their children's limited possibilities, in practice leaving unaccompanied minors alone with their concern for close relatives who are enduring terrible conditions aboard. Eide's (2000) study indicates that the unaccompanied children who risk losing contact with their parents, and who experience conflicts with their new caregivers, also risk psychological and social problems. Engebrigtsen (2002) argues that such experiences also indicate that there is a correlation between maintaining good relationships with parents at home and coping as a migrant in a novel context (Engebrigtsen Ibid: 135).

Backlund et al. (2012) have analyzed how social service works with unaccompanied children, stating that the situation of unaccompanied children and youngsters in Sweden is best characterized by the paradox that despite having many officials and support staff working with them (such as custodians/guardians, teachers, HVB staff, foster parents, healthcare professionals and social workers) no one has or will take overall parental responsibility for them in their everyday life. Backlund et al. (2012) also highlight that as the social service has limited experience working with unaccompanied minors they often become very restrictive in granting different intervention and support. Social workers also tend to perceive the unaccompanied children as overtly different from other children they engage with in their daily work (Cf. Kohli's conclusions from his study of British social workers work with unaccompanied children and adolescents, Ibid 2006, 2007). Social workers were also less inclined to do follow-ups on unaccompanied children placed with their next of kin than those placed in their care (UNICEF 2010; Gunnarsson 2008; Stretmo and Melander 2013).

Malmsten (2012) has studied how unaccompanied children narrate their experiences of having lived in a so-called transit accommodation in Sweden.

Transit accommodation is a form of temporary HVB, where unaccompanied children and youngsters stay while awaiting to be transferred to an “arrival municipality” (*mottagningskommun*)⁸. The study shows that despite how children and young people consistently express satisfaction with their time in transit and feel grateful for the support they were able to get from adults employed there, they also reported feeling psychologically down while awaiting their asylum claim to be processed or after receiving a rejection notice. Malmsten argues that care staff need to have a better understanding of both the asylum process and training in how to talk to children. Despite that the stay in transit is thought of as very short-term solution, there are many children and youth who are forced to stay there for longer periods, indicating that the transit accommodation must also be prepared for lengthy stays for those forced to live under endured uncertainty. Similar findings were also highlighted in Eide and Broch (2010), Eide et al. (2012), Lidén (2013), and Stretmo and Melander (2013), pointing to how the asylum process becomes a time wherein many unaccompanied minors experience stress and uncertainty (Cf. Andersson et al. 2010; Björnberg 2013 with regard to similar findings in regards to asylum-seeking children in families). Although there is a consensus amongst officials and support staff working with them that the risk of rejection puts children and youngsters in a highly exposed situation, there is also a sense of powerlessness, as the decisions are made by the government officials, a situation that neither unaccompanied minors support staff nor officials feel they have any actual influence over or insight into (Stretmo and Melander 2013).

Pastoor de Wal (2012; 2013), Backlund et al. (2012), and Stretmo and Melander (2013) have conducted research on unaccompanied children in the Norwegian and Swedish school systems. According to their analysis unaccompanied minors are often put to the fore (by themselves and their teachers) as a group of particularly school motivated and eager-to-learn students, who often find themselves struggling and working hard in order to progress in school, construct new friendships, and learn a new language.⁹

⁸ See Chapter 3.2.3.

⁹A meta-study conducted on Swedish educational research on young people’s educational careers by Lundqvist (2010) shows that although children with migrant backgrounds in general accommodate much higher educational aspirations than other students (i.e., Swedish-born without migrant background), the group is still under-represented in post-secondary education. School motivation amongst adolescents with migrant backgrounds does not necessarily predict their further school careers. Among the group of 25-year-olds with migrant backgrounds, 35% started higher education in the academic year 2006/07, while the corresponding figure for 25-year-olds that had a Swedish background was 46% (Lundqvist 2010: 21 f). Lundqvist explains this discrepancy by showing how children and young people with migrant backgrounds often also come from homes and families with a weak labour market attachment, low incomes and education levels. This provides

As unaccompanied children's access to education prior to their arrival was possibly dependent on intersecting dimensions such as their country of origin, social class, parental level of education, disabilities, their age at arrival, gender, and ethnicity, and as the majority of unaccompanied children who migrate to Norway and Sweden originate from contexts such as Afghanistan or Somalia (countries with a recent history of war and political instability), many children have had sporadic opportunities to go to school (Stretmo and Melander forthcoming and Melander 2013). However, some Somali and Afghan children and young people talk about having had the economic possibility to receive private schooling, or having attended Madrassa school (Koranskola), and yet others talk about having attended schools for undocumented children in Iran (i.e., some of the Afghan children) (Stretmo and Melander 2013; Backlund et al. 2012; Eide 2005; Eide et al. 2012). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that unaccompanied minors consist as a heterogeneous group of children and young people with varying school preparation and experiences (Cf. Bunar 2010, but also Kohli 2006; Watters 2008). Consequently, the unaccompanied minors have quite different points of reference in order to catch up to the Swedish and Norwegian born children at their same age.

Simply blaming the unaccompanied minors for their own possible educational failings would be simplistic. Lunneblad and Asplund Karlsson (2009) and Torpsten (2012) point to how teachers, for instance, tend to perceive children with different educational backgrounds or those in the so-called introductory school programs from a compensatory point of view, meaning that teachers see it as their main task to counteract the perceived shortcomings of their students instead of working interculturally. According to Runfors (2003), teachers in Swedish schools tend to view migrant children as different by focusing on their shortcomings and thus risk homogenizing a rather heterogenous group of students. Stretmo and Melander (2013; 2014) further highlight how teachers render very low expectations for their migrant and unaccompanied students (Cf. the classical study of Pygmalion in the Classroom and how teachers' anticipations can make their students bloom academically).

The students in the preparatory classrooms or children with migrant backgrounds, such as unaccompanied minors, are seen as somewhat flawed or inadequate compared to the norm, which is an inherent idea of Swedish or Norwegian students (see e.g., Bunar 2010; Gruber 2007/2008): They "are

migrant children with rather different socioeconomic conditions compared to their Swedish born peers with Swedish parents (Ibid. Cf. Bunar 2010).

envisioned for their perceived shortages whereas their individuality is silenced” (Bunar 2010: 28f). Burman (2008) argues that activities such as learning, teaching and the concepts of skills should always be analyzed contextually and in relation to current (school) policies. Still, many studies also emphasize how school is an important node in the lives of unaccompanied children (Eide and Broch 2010; Pastoor de Wal 2012; Andersson et al. 2005; 2010.) As many of the unaccompanied children carry with them painful experiences and memories, many also talk about their longing of their close family and friends (see e.g., Eide 2005; Eide et al. 2012) and of feelings of alienation and loneliness (see de Wal Pastoor 2013; Björnberg 2013; Andersson et al. 2010; Pinson, Arnot and Candappa 2010) research findings support how going to school offers and functions as an important and safe structure. Thus, school is an important venue in order to meet other children, youths and adults, build relationships and make friends, and construct a sense of normality and stability in the unaccompanied child’s life (Cf. “a salutogenic arena”, Björnberg 2013; Kohli 2006; 2007).

What these different studies on unaccompanied children and youngsters, and different Norwegian and Swedish contexts, show is how (ethnocentric and dichotomist) societal images of migrants and migrant children are often brought forward and are being produced and reproduced in daily thought, speech and practice (see e.g., Kamali 2005). Despite this Bunar (2010) argues that children and youngsters, and hence unaccompanied minors, should not be understood as being merely passively assigned a marginalized position in society. Instead, unaccompanied children and youngsters (and other migrant children) should be understood as agents actively trying to get by in their everyday life. Yet, as newly arrived migrants trying to navigate in a novel context, and because many also have limited knowledge of the Swedish or Norwegian language, migrant children risk a double marginalization (Bunar 2010; Elmeroth and Häge 64ff). Torpsten (2012) and de Waal Pastoor (2013), for instance, discuss the implication of migrant students often finding it hard to talk to their teachers or ask them for help. Lidén (2013) points to how questions concerning participation, child perspective and working with unaccompanied children’s best interests demand that children and youngsters are given factual opportunities to make their cases heard. (This might, for example, require that resources such as qualified interpreters are made available in a much more generous fashion, Cf. Keselman 2013, or that children and youngsters are given some influence over the daily routines at HVB facilities or foster homes concerning bedtime schedules and meals, for instance, Cf. Söderqvist 2012; Kohli 2008; Kohli, Connely and Warman, 2010; Malmsten 2012).

In light of the previously conducted research, it is clear that working with unaccompanied children requires knowledge about the children's own experiences, their everyday strategies, and how the different actors involved in their reception understand and treat them. I will furthermore argue that it is also vital to link the analysis at the micro level to the macro arena of comparative asylum and migration policy. Though a few studies exist (e.g., Eide 2005; Vitus 2011), there is still a lack of Swedish and Norwegian contemporary studies aiming to frame the societal understanding of unaccompanied minors against the backdrop of policies and national and public problematizations. Additionally, it is also crucial to visualize the societal images of children and families, of migration and migrants embedded in policy, and value them in light of the consequences they might have on children and young people seeking asylum as unaccompanied minors. According to Eide and Broch (2010) and Wernesjö (2012; 2014), there is, moreover, few studies aiming to analyze unaccompanied minors from a comparative perspective or endeavoring to study how class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality, and so forth give different children and youngsters' diverse possibilities in a new setting and context.

In this thesis, I intend to offer new insights and further understanding on how unaccompanied minors speak about their experiences, and analyze them in relation to official conceptualizations in a comparison between Norway and Sweden and to images and understandings put forth by the people involved in governing them.

2

Theoretical and methodological points of departure

In order to see things we are always in the need of good glasses. In this chapter, I present the eclectic pair of lenses through which I analyze how the concept of unaccompanied minors is put to the fore as a specific subject of knowledge in different texts and contexts. I will also present and define my central concepts and how they work together.

Firstly, in this chapter I introduce a perspective where “meaning” is seen as constituted in language and through social interaction. Accordingly, anything from policy papers, media articles or the way we talk and narrate our life experiences are embedded with different codes of meaning and knowledge. How to go about deconstructing such statements becomes of central concern to the researcher. The discourse analysis offers an analytical and a methodological advantage to explore and analyze how language is used and how conceptions of the social world are expressed contextually. This point of reference has enabled me to treat different texts as if they had equivalent weight or legitimacy (see e.g., Chapter 3, section 3.3). The discourse analysis has hence permitted me to conduct a study of different types of speech and texts: a) how Norway and Sweden articulate their understandings of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in official policy; b) how popular media images of these minors are represented in Swedish and Norwegian newspaper articles; and as c) how unaccompanied minors and some of the people working for and with them in schools and home for care and housing (HVB) facilities as guardians and foster parents (interview data) articulate their experiences. Central to this passage is also to understand how concepts such as experience and narrative relate to my understanding of discourse.¹⁰

¹⁰ Although a discourse analysis allows me to treat the different texts equally, it is also important to understand that there clearly exists a different precedence or “preferential right of interpretation” between national policies, the media narrations or the way people talk, respectively.

Secondly, and in connection to the understanding of how meaning and knowledge are constituted and brought forward, I also connect discourse to governmentality in order to grasp the relationship between the state and the individual.

By analyzing how unaccompanied minors become transformed into a “governable space” in diverse contexts, I can link specific national conceptualizations — whether they are intermediated by the media or articulated as the need for explicit modes of conduct (at the macro level) — to how people working with unaccompanied minors or those categorized as unaccompanied minors talk about these official conceptualizations (in interview data) and their experiences of them.

Thirdly, I was inspired by the North American social constructivist approach to the understanding of social problems and of critical discourse moments, as unaccompanied minors have been perceived as a kind of social problem to which the Swedish and Norwegian government or relevant authorities have been prompted to act. The construction of social problems and the media’s role in raising, shaping and molding specific issues is thus imperative to emphasize in this chapter.

Fourthly, I present the critical strategy of intersectionalism as social problems are presented and packaged in relation to stereotypes and specific intersections of gender, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and so forth. An intersectional lens enables me to link how popular images of age, gender, class, ethnicity, and family intersect, and analyze how they work together or vary in accordance with one another in order to allow a certain articulation of unaccompanied minors as a particular knowledge subject. Relative to my analysis of a selection of unaccompanied minors, it will also be important to see how these youngsters distance, identify or even disassociate themselves with regard to official images or representations.

Lastly, I will argue how these different perspectives together can offer new insights and prove fruitful to the analysis of unaccompanied children and youngsters in a comparative perspective.

2.1 Language and power — discourse, meaning and social knowledge

As a construct and specific scientific technique, discourse analysis can be used to study different kinds of communication such as speech, text and social interaction at large. The method is based on certain ontological and epistemological assumptions, specific methodologies to attack the field of re-

search, and special techniques for language analysis (see Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000:7-11). The goal of such an examination is often to uncover and explore underlying power relationships by critically deconstructing the (everyday/common sense) knowledge that we take for granted.

In this thesis I will use a discourse concept inspired by Michel Foucault. Discourses, according to his definition, refer not only to what is said in different contexts but also to underlying processes that render the spoken word possible (Foucault 1993).

A critique of the Foucauldian discourse concept is that it tends to be too static, as it overemphasizes the order and stability within a given discourse (Thörn 1997: 143f). Instead of analyzing, for example, the possible struggles that exist between different opposing discourses, the Foucauldian analysis focuses on discursive order, and the unequivocal character of the various ideas, generalizations, narratives, and conceptualizations that construct a specific discourse (Ibid). I argue that a Foucauldian perspective can positively be combined with a focus that also aims to highlight the conceptual polarities that often coexist within a discourse: by studying, for instance, ambivalences the instabilities and possible ambiguities of a specific discourse can be highlighted and analyzed (Cf. Thörn 1997).¹¹

There always exist incongruences, ambivalences and conflicts within a discourse and consequently a variety of possible meanings. Through processes of dichotomization, binary oppositions are constructed. In this context, binary oppositions are understood to be conceptual opponents that do not exist in an equal relationship to the other (see e.g., Bauman, 1991: 9). These word pairs are furthermore interdependent, as the one cannot exist without the other. Their connotations stretch far beyond the notions they are supposed to relate to and this creates an inner hierarchical order between them: “traditional” as the opposite of “modern”; “irrational” as the opposite of “rational”; “masculine” versus “feminine”; and “black” versus “white” are illustrative of how such distinctions work (Cf. Butler, 1999, Minh-ha 1999, Mohanty 1999 and Bauman, 1991:53ff for similar lines of argumentation).

Through processes of inclusion and exclusion, a vague and fluid concept of normality is constructed (Foucault 1972). Since normality as such is hard to fixate, a continuous underlining of deviant behavior and positions is rather quintessential (Cf. Foucault 1965). The inclusion of what is contextually considered “normal” is hence legitimized and reproduced through a constant exclusion of all aspects associated or considered “abnormal” or “deviant” in social practice. Such distinctions are furthermore interdependent to other

¹¹ I will dwell more on the concept of ambivalence in section 2.2.2.

dichotomies such as the relationship between what is considered “truth” and/or “veracity” versus “falseness” (Foucault 1993:14f).

There consists no “social world” prior to our discourses in the Foucauldian (1993) perspective and hence “no difference between substance and shape” (Thörn 2004: 31). “Meaning”, when understood as a socially bound and constructed entity, becomes rather fluid, changeable and unfixed. Given the fluidity and variety of possible meanings it is important to note that even though objects could be assigned differently, there is a rather restricted or limited (historically, culturally and contextually bound) repertoire of narrations in order to make sense of a given social phenomenon (Börjesson och Palmblad 2007: 11).¹² Instead, we act somewhat violent or suppressive when we assign subjects their specific meaning (Foucault 1993: 36-38. Cf. Thörn 2004; Lentz Taguchi 2009: 60f; Matsson 2010 for similar lines of thought).

Foucault talks of knowledge production but also of the inherent consequences of such truths: when certain aspects of the social world are made visible to us this very process also silences other possible facets (Ibid: 1993). Foucault (1977:30ff, 61ff, 2002:35-44, 57ff, 75-82) studied how knowledge and meaning changed historically and how to go about separating, or channelling out, the underlying power structures and principles that control what is articulated or not in a given context, for instance in a certain discipline or historical epoch.

The construction of meaning and knowledge holds evidence of the power relationships that operate within any given society. This makes it interesting to dissect positions that have been assigned the opportunity to identify, address and articulate the social world, in other words create and uphold meaning (Foucault, 1993: 7-15). Discourses in the Foucauldian perception are related to the power to define and categorize the social world (Thörn 2004: 33). Power in this sense is relationally bound and constructive, but yet also limiting: blended within the specific discourses are strong pictures of dominance and subordination (Lentz Taguchi 2009). These are presented in such a way that they become part of the subject’s own internalization and self-control. Central to the perspective I present here is that subjects should be comprehended as born into a world of a pre-existing language, and that it is through this language that we (and others) make sense of ourselves. We iden-

¹² The dichotomy of gender (see e.g., Butler, 1999) and the parent versus the child (see Jenks 1996), and between the citizen amid the migrant (Malkki 1995), are all examples of specific social constructions and dichotomies attached to explicit historical, spatial and cultural points in time. Repertoires working on unaccompanied minors are henceforth clearly connected to (e.g., Western/White/Middleclass/early 21th century) constructions of, for example, age, gender, ethnicity. I will dwell some more on these thoughts with regard to the intersectional account in section 2.4.

tify and associate or object and distance ourselves from the different subject positions to which we are assigned.

In modern refugee reception a distinction between normality versus its exception has been evident in how the migrant subject has been understood as a potential menace to a system of fixed borders. Citizens have often been perceived as subjects belonging to a specific nation-state hence making migrants and refugees' problematic "out-of-place" subjects to be controlled and monitored (Malkki 1995). Interesting distinctions between veracity and falseness, and between the subjects positioned as trustworthy versus fraudulent, are also made visible when we treat asylum seekers with suspicion and disbelief, for instance.

With regard to a study of the discourse of the unaccompanied minor this implies that when the Norwegian and Swedish authorities talk about unaccompanied minors and/or asylum-seeking children, they produce a governable space and that it is within this space that what can be labeled "programmatic" and "technological governing" takes place.¹³ Within the discourse of the unaccompanied minor there are also the boundaries that distinguish the subjects allocated there from those who are not. In summary, this discourse expresses the sometimes rather different conceptualizations and knowledge of unaccompanied minors that can coexist simultaneously in Norway and Sweden.

Furthermore, when, for instance, authorities launch a new strategy toward a given group, such as unaccompanied minors, this is felt on (or in) the very "body" of the people that the practice and regulations are directed and addressed. Given that the different positions within a knowledge system (for instance within a nation-state such as Norway and Sweden or within a given scientific discipline or a social institution such as the family) have not been assigned, the same privilege to legitimize and construct new meanings, the "production of meaning", is also seen as analogous to processes of inclusion and exclusion of specific subjects versus others.

2.1.1 NARRATIVES AND EXPERIENCE

With reference to the specific discourse perspective presented above, two other key concepts and how they relate to discourse are also important to explain here: these concepts are narrative and experience.

¹³ In section 2.2, I will develop and define the concepts of programmatic versus technological governing in more detail.

When we make sense of the social world and its different facets, we tend to articulate our ordeals, and our moral or social judgement and ethical guiding principles, by packaging them in a narrative form (Johansson 2005: 16). Narratives could hence be defined as a “specific form of discourse” or speech acts, identifiable through criteria such as causality and temporality. (Ibid: 34). Narratives are hence examples of the shared historical, spatial and contextual repertoires that Foucault highlights (Cf. Börjesson and Palmblad 2007: 11). Moreover, storytelling (sharing anecdotes or narrating our personal experiences) could be defined as strategies in order to come to terms with different and fundamental elements such as time, process and change. Narratives are therefore interesting to analyze, as they tend to reveal a lot about commonly shared notions, but also because subject-identifications and positioning are revealed in them (Cf. Johansson 2005: 27f).

Experiences, which can shortly be defined as different occurrences, episodes, actions, and accounts of actions, are often retold as narratives (Johansson 2005: 85f). Through narration and by narrating, experiences become mediated in such a manner that they seem meaningful: they are given structure and presented with a kind of coherency to them. When we highlight something such as an experience it also tends to hold a strong claim of actuality to it: who can be more truth-telling than subjects who have experienced something for themselves? Scott (1992) objects to such a view of experience by underscoring that experience does not hold the evidence that grounds what we know. Through narrating our experiences we try to make them knowledgeable to ourselves and others:

It is not individuals that have experiences but subjects who are constituted through experiences. (Scott, 1992: 26)

Talking about how experiences are often mediated in a narrative form is hence not to say that experiences in anyway are self-evident or even straightforward. What subjects experience is already an interpretation. Consequently, experiences are always in need of (re-)interpretation (Scott, 1992: 37). Experience in such a perception can be understood as the starting point of processes that might culminate in the realization and the articulation of a specific social consciousness and knowledge, for instance a common and shared identity such as class and/or gender. It can be argued that experiences serve an integrating function that carries the potential to bring and bridge together different subjects and social structures into what then presents itself as a seemingly sound whole. This highlights how experiences are discursively founded and unfixed, and that they also hold evidence of the discursive logic

described in the previous section. Similar to how experiences can work as possible starting points for identification, this very unifying process also excludes human activity by simply not counting them as experience (Ibid: 26-33). This implies that not all experiences are recognized or considered as knowledge, and that processes of turning experience into knowledge or into a being are dependent on context and the content of the experiences (Skeggs 1997: 50, 157ff). According to Foucault, “beingness” is historically constituted as experience (Skeggs 1997: 49). In this sense beingness is furthermore always mediated through the discourses that we can access in order to make sense of and interpret our experiences. Experiences serve as a starting point that enables subjects to talk about things that have happened, and for establishing similarities and difference. Yet, what count as experience is always contestable and hence political. Skeggs (1997) argues that what we see as social knowledge is always rather partial and situated and that it continually corresponds to the interest of specific groups, while excluding and silencing others (Ibid: 35-39).

In my analysis, I will use the concept of experience in the sense that Scott (1992) and Skeggs (1997) proclaim, acknowledging how experiences produce and constitute different subjects, rather than understanding experience as a fundamental entity of social knowledge. Experience as a point of departure enables the analysis of how professionals and support staff talk about and narrate their experiences managing or governing unaccompanied minors, but also the study of how children and youngsters talk about their experiences of being categorized as such. It is how these young people narrate their experiences that can reveal something about how they position themselves with regard to this specific category (or not).

Within the discourse of the unaccompanied minor, there are speech acts that seek to mediate and construct specific social perceptions of this phenomenon by representing them in a narrative form. Talking about or giving meaning to the concept of the unaccompanied minor is often done by presenting narratives, either in the form of life stories and in newspaper articles or in national policies, which is why studying narratives seems suitable and rather complementary to the discourse analysis.

In order to bridge the experiences of subjects to the official and public understandings of a phenomenon, I will furthermore link discourse to the processes that make the governing and monitoring of a specific social group possible.

2.2 Governmentality

Scholars such as Miller and Rose (2008) have studied the relationships between the welfare state at the macro level and the individual subject or citizen (see e.g., Rose 1999/2008) in what they define as studies aiming to analyze “the conduct of conduct” (Ibid: 14). Through critical studies, inspired by the work of Foucault, the field of governmentality has pursued the understanding of how states or (national) authorities become intertwined with the vocabularies that circumscribe what can or cannot be said in a given period or specific time. Governing, when understood in such a way, is hence a matter of intervention and transforming social spheres into governable spaces (Miller and Rose 2008: 32). Therefore, making an object knowable in such a way that it can be governed is much more than a speculative activity, as it requires the invention of space and procedures of notation in order to govern it. Through such procedures diverse dimensions of society are made amenable to intervention and regulation (Ibid: 30). To analyze what is said, thought and done, which I claim is the cornerstone of the discourse analysis, is also to point out what is sayable, thinkable and doable (Miller and Rose 2008: 3) in different contexts and how governing is about discursive production. Through governmentality studies, the different power devices render the intervention of the state or organizations into individual life possible, and the knowledge that underpins such interventions can be analyzed and addressed. In order to link different data such as policy papers, media articles and interview transcripts, I decided to partially build on the framework of governmentality.

Governmentality refers to “endeavours that shape, guide (and) direct the conduct of others” (Rose 1999/2008: 3). However, the study of governmentality also stresses how acts of governing work and seek to deconstruct underlying practices and rationalities: whether they are expressed in policies directed at, for instance, different child-rearing practices in private households, in the context of the school system, or in the way a country or nation decides to articulate its reception of refugees and asylum seekers or point out unaccompanied minors as recipients of a different reception.

Miller and Rose (2008) distinguish between what they label programmatic versus technological governing. Governing is about problematizing and articulating social problems that can be addressed or become targets of action.¹⁴ Programs of government refer to the dimension of governing where

¹⁴ I will talk more about problematizations and the articulation of social problems in section 2.3 ‘The construction of social problems’.

specific problems are presented and defined, and how possible solutions to them are articulated by experts, theorists within the field in question, in reports, and white papers etc. Programs of governing not only include what are considered important goals to achieve (the desired outcome) but also why achieving them is imperative or even vital given the specific problematizations (Miller and Rose 2008: 61-63). Technological governing, however, refers to the operative dimension of governing, where specific techniques, schemes, methods, and procedures are articulated that might enable the aims and desires (as part of programs of governing) to take action in everyday life (Ek 2012: 17). By combining the programmatic and the technological dimensions of governing, Miller and Rose (2008) visualize the different activities needed in order to govern, ensure this conduct is legitimate, and make the governable space receptive to this specific conduct (Ek 2012: 18).

Programs of governing are continually translated and mediated through diverse and plural networks in society. This process links the calculations made in one place, for example a social committee or specific working group, to action and practice conducted elsewhere, or what can be defined as “governing at a distance” (Miller and Rose 2008: 34). Governing in this context points to the various attempts to “shape conduct in specific ways in order to obtain or produce some effects” and “to avert undesired effects” (Miller and Rose 2008: 52).

In my thesis, the focus is how different texts such as policy papers, media articles and interviews make sense of, describe and talk about governing with regard to unaccompanied minors: how unaccompanied children and youngsters are articulated and transformed into a specific governable space, and that given these specific understandings how best to govern them and by whom. Further analytical questions central to this analysis are how unaccompanied minors and how those working with them narrate or talk about governing and their experiences of being governed.

In order to understand some of the operating logic when unaccompanied minors are transformed into a governable space, we also need to understand how and why other groups of migrants have been singled out as particular fields to be governed in specific ways.

2.2.1 GOVERNING THE ASYLUM SEEKER

The modern art of government seeks to “govern by making people free”, yet by also inextricably linking them to specific norms, techniques and values of civility (Rose 1999: 144). This points to liberal governing as a different power exercise in comparison to classical or traditional forms of domination:

it is not just simply to dominate but to presuppose the freedom of the dominated and hence to work on the subject in accordance (Rose 1999/2008:4f). This points to how the very administration of the self in the era of neo-liberalization has opened up novel ways to exercise power (Foucault 1978/79). However, as other theorists note the external conduction and monitoring of people's thinking and behavior is not necessarily liberal at all in cases where people do not behave in the ways that are expected and required of them (Rose 1999; Miller and Rose 2008; Dean 2010). The presupposed freedom of the workers, the consumers and the citizens is similar to a closer monitoring and scrutiny of those people considered possible risks or menaces to society. Rose (1999) links these parallel processes to what he labels "circuits of inclusion" versus "circuits of exclusion" in a manner quite useful for this analysis. He argues that the people or subjects pointed out as abjects or cast-offs in society are excluded from the full life as citizens and are positioned as risks in need of management (Ibid: 240-246, 253-259).

Sustained control and discipline over marginalized people — such as asylum seekers or newly arrived and/or irregular migrants, or those considered "at-risk groups" (i.e., unaccompanied minors or vulnerable children) — have increased in all societies, same as those claiming to be the most (neo)liberal. Liberal and anti-authoritarian governing seems similar to a sense of liberal authoritarianism (Watters 2007: 108–130). The conditions under which, for instance, asylum seekers are controlled produces rather circumscribed contexts and spaces where social rights such as health and social care may be only fleetingly available. Europe's governing of asylum seekers has implied a sustained monitoring and control, where shifting legal and political contexts construct various exception spaces, where asylum seekers or migrants are placed (Cp. Ibid). In a Foucauldian understanding this constructs the ministering or governing of asylum seekers associated to risk management and the security apparatuses and control mechanisms connected to them (Rose 1999: 259-263; Watters 2007: 414). If people cannot see what is in their best interest or refuse to act in accordance with the given rules, they risk being harshly governed for their own freedom or for their own good. Watters (2007), for example, highlights the rather widespread use of Draconian laws amongst European countries (the use of detention and the withdrawal of economic contributions being only two examples) when it comes to administering rejected asylum seekers who refuse to return to their country of origin.

Freedom in this understanding is synonymous with the obligation to do the right thing or what is considered as the constructive and rightful choices (Cf. Lalander 2001 with regard to the Swedish zero drug tolerance and the choice to say no to drugs): to work, consume, and stay healthy and active.

This especially becomes interesting when looking at the reception and/or integration of refugees in Western societies and how European states pursue the stimulation of good circulation (such as capital, goods, services, and the bodies of potential workers/consumers) while at once highly regulating the “bad” circulation such as, for instance, subjects targeted as potential burdens to the host society (irregular migrants, asylum seekers and so forth). This is a dual process that in Foucault’s (1978/79) articulation can be described through the logic of securitization.

As I describe in Chapter 1, some scholars (Cf. Thompson 1971; Fassin 2005; Watters 2007; Pinson, Arnot and Candappa 2010) evoke the concept of moral economy in order to understand how such discrepancy has come into play with regard to the governing of asylum seekers or why they or refugees are treated as exceptions in the European context, where some subjects are considered as more or less legitimate receivers of social contribution or as a potentially threatening presence in society. This understanding can also be connected to how states operate in order to stimulate what is understood as good circulation and yet hinder the flow of what consequently is constructed as bad circulation (Cf. Rose 1999; 1999/2008).

2.2.2 GOVERNING AMBIVALENCE

The blurry distinctions between good and bad circulation, or between the deserved versus undeserved, seem to confront European states with a sense of incongruity or uncertainty. According to Bauman (1991), the area of what he frames as “liquid modernity” has forced the European and/or Western societies to face up to a state of constant ambivalence. The quests for enlightenment prior to our post-industrial era brought about a need and desire to structure and classify the social world. As an allegory for the garden (i.e., “the gardening state”) the nation was comprehended as a machinery or garden, where nature was cultured and civilized. Within this system the upholding of order became important (Bauman, 1991: 28ff-369ff). As an allegory for the gardener the nation-state categorized its subject according to taxonomy, dividing them by in- or out-groups.

The creation of order is constructed on the basis of complementary categories or dichotomies (Bauman 1991: 5). Through the gaze of these binary oppositions the world is divided in groups of friends or foes (Bauman 1991: 55), and as a hierarchical system there is no equality between the “in-group of friends” and the “out-group” of enemies (Bauman 1991: 9, 175-178). The inadequate consumers, such as the poor, the homeless, irregular migrants or rejected asylum seekers, become potential weeds in the structured garden of

consumers. These out-groups, though not entirely classifiable within the dichotomy of the friend versus enemy, hence constitute computer errors or flaws in the nation-state machinery. As strangers they disturb the balance by being physically too close (they are amongst us and we sometimes pity them), but yet also distant and secluded and different (are they really legitimate refugees?) (see e.g., Bauman 1991: 60 and Rose 1999: 253ff, for similar reasoning of different out-groups such as the homeless, the working-poor and the so-called “underclass” etc.). In this pretence strangers are a “double exposure” (see Thörn, 2004: 249ff) and ambivalent, being neither completely good nor bad, neither friend nor foe.

The stranger is for this reason the bane of modernity. He may well serve as the archetypical example ... of Mary Douglas the slimy – an entity ineradicably ambivalent, sitting astride an embattled barricade, blurring a boundary line vital to the construction of a particular social order or a particular life world. ... He stands for the treacherousness of friends, for the cunning disguise of enemies, for fallibility of order, vulnerability of the inside. (Bauman 1991: 61)

As a source of irritation within the structured nation, failed asylum seekers, economic migrants and irregulars are perceived as threatening to modern society. According to Watters (2007), asylum seekers are framed as ambiguous subjects in order for the state to overcome the environment of insecurity that their presence induces, but also to legitimize the restrictive measures taken against them.

Because of their position as “undecidables” the state is in constant need to try to restructure and secure itself from the danger of these strangers. The strangers become the stain of our time (see e.g., Thörn, 2004:187 for similar reasoning with regard to Swedish representations of homelessness). Bauman (1991) links our perception of asylum seekers and other outcast groups to the articulation of the Jews in the Nazi discourse. The final solution in this perspective offered a path for the German society to “clean up” and put an end to the “problem” of Semites. In this perspective it is interesting to highlight what Fassin (2001, 2005), Derleuyn and Broekaert (2005) and Watters (2007) analyze as strategies of different European states in order to avoid receiving asylum claims and hence also asylum seekers in the first place (see e.g., Chapter 1).

Fassin (2005) points to how ambivalences can also be expressed inherently. For instance, the French Red Cross built a provisional tent camp close to Sangatte, France in order to shelter and cater to the many migrants that sleep close to Calais (while awaiting their journey toward the white cliffs of Dover

and the promised land of England). In the French media the representation of this camp soon became two-fold, articulated as a potential menace both because the camp was seen as: a) causing a humanitarian catastrophe; and b) the fact that the camp could be seen as attracting hoards of new migrants (a pull-factor for more migration). The scapegoating of the work of the Red Cross in order to ease an acute situation also points to a double bind in the public perception of migrant care: “the circumstances of migrants and refugees gives rise to an imperative to act, but this action (risks being) presented as an exacerbation of a perceived problem giving rise to (more) pressures to curtail it” (Watters 2007: 405).

In her classic study of the post-war European refugee reception and the body of research conducted on refugees, Malkki (1995) demonstrates how two opposing and ambivalent interpretations have shaped and structured the conditions under which refugees have been treated in and by Western European societies. In the direct aftermath of the Second World War, the millions of what came to be known as misplaced persons were perceived to pose a threat to the new and fragile stability between European states. Structure, order and control became catchwords in order to describe the reception aiming to hold the millions of refugees under close monitoring and scrutiny. Remodeled internment and/or concentration camps were put to use as a repositories in order to cater the many refugees. Malkki highlights how migration was put to the fore as an anomaly that was constructed as a phenomenon violating the seemingly natural and structured order of nations and citizens (Ibid: 508).

It was not until the beginning of the 1980s that a health-oriented focus also came into play with regard to the European reception of refugees. This was paralleled by how the refugee became articulated as a specific subject of knowledge. Migration was seen as connected to experiences of up-rootedness, which were conceptualized as causing refugees an irreversible loss of coherence and identity. The refugee was now constructed as a damaged and traumatized sufferer. Malkki (1995) states that such an articulation helped transform migration into a social problem and homogenize refugees into specific and hence governable subjects, perceived as in need of specific types of support and social care (Ibid: 511-513). The two opposing images, the migrant as a possible threat to the natural order of things (i.e., states, borders and citizens as belonging to their countries of residence) and the migrant as a potential sufferer operate in contemporary migration discourse. On the one hand, migration and migrants are subjects beset as targets of surveillance and control, yet on the other hand, groups of migrants (i.e., people targeted as victims, refugees and unaccompanied children) are pointed out as

receivers of social support. Malkki's point is interesting to analyze with reference to what Rose (2000) argues is the tendency of states to "combine incompatible specifications of the problem to be addressed, and cycle rapidly between different programmes of its solution" (Ibid: 322). In this process the ambivalence that the stranger or out-groups awakens becomes part and parcel of the very program set out to monitor and govern them. An analysis of governmentality can hence contribute to our understanding of this complex and contradictory situation.

Malkki's (1995) analysis above points to other important ambivalences between the state and strangers: Positioned as so-called irregulars, migrant visa overstayers or rejected asylum seekers are often perceived as excluded from society or as outcast groups. There is an ambiguity between the facts that migrants as such are visible in society while we cannot judge their legal status by the mere sight of them (see e.g., Hansen 2008; Squire 2009; Holgersson 2011).¹⁵

2.3 The construction of social problems and/or problematizations

In order for a program of governing to become operative and for specific technologies to be invented, social phenomena needs to be addressed and/or problematized as social problems. The articulation of social problems involves strategies to awake public opinion, but also to get people or groups involved in the construction of a specific articulation or perception of that problem (Lindgren 1993: 210; Miller and Rose 2008: 32-35). In order for a social issue to be defined or categorized as a social problem by a given society, the issue at hand needs furthermore to be presented as an important one. The formalization or intervention of individual suffering as examples of social problems are typically proceeded by a process of definition where subjects considered in need of support from society (i.e., the real victims) are singled out from those considered more or less unworthy of social support and assistance.

For instance, when the UN convention articulates who is to be considered a refugee, distinctions are clearly made between the specific situations and circumstances that legally position some subjects as refugees versus those

¹⁵ In this pretence the visualization of the asylum seeker illustrates the power of stereotypes. The discourse of asylum has, in a common sense understanding, been interrelated to other concepts such as trafficking, smuggling and a state of irregularity to so-called asylum shopping, etc. In this theoretical chapter, the meaning of asylum seekers relates to this wide and blurred common sense understanding.

who are not. Such legal definitions are the results of the hard work of different moral entrepreneurs or claims-makers who have struggled to raise public awareness and establish a specific understanding of the problem at hand (Cf. Becker 1967, Ryding 2005: 14. Cf. Malkki 1995). This is a kind of symbolic power struggle where different moral entrepreneurs could be described as fighting to win recognition of their construction of the given problem but also their specific solution to it. In governmentality studies these practices or processes are conceptualized in terms of problematizations in order to highlight how social problems do not exist a priori but must be articulated and made visible in order to make spaces of society governable (Miller and Rose 2008: 14, 102-104). I will also draw on the North American social constructivist approach to the study on the construction of social problems (Jenks 1996; Loseke 2003; Best 2008) and particularly the concept of critical discourse moments (Cf. Gamson and Modigliani 1989).

2.3.1 CRITICAL DISCURSIVE MOMENTS AND THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN MEDIATING SOCIAL PROBLEMS

When it comes to bringing to light issues such as unaccompanied minors, Norwegian and Swedish newspapers (as well as other media) have played an important role in articulating calls for action with regard to this specific group. The content of the media representation as such is hence important to critically dissect.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that media discourse should be understood as important formation ground(s) for public opinion. Not necessarily predicting policy outcomes, but rather be seen as a cultural system or a forum for public opinion to be counted for in its own right. According to Best (2008), the typical social problems process begins with claims-making that precedes involvement by the media. Much policy construction, lobbying and so forth might also take place at levels of society and situations that are blocked or even banned from public view. In this perspective media discourse are to be seen “a set of interpretative packages that give meaning to an issue” (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 3). Media become an important agenda setter: Through coverage in the daily media, claims-making, often addressed by interest groups or experts hoping that their topic will be highlighted on the news agenda, ultimately are made available to a larger audience and important policymakers (Cf. Thörn 2010). Media directs our gaze by highlighting certain aspects above others. However, we are free to interpret, act and react (or encode and decode, Cf. Hall 1973) according to our differences,

but as an audience we are often reduced to eat or pick from the menu served to us by the media (Brune 2008).

Coverage of social problems in media are also connected to what Gamson and Modigliani (1989) label “critical discourse moments”, which could be defined as specific critical discourse happenings that focus public attention in different ways. Critical discourse moments are incidences that create discourse opportunities, but because events vary in importance, dramatic appeal and degree of conflict, these events affect available discourse opportunities differently. A range of incidences, such as institutional and cultural changes or specific events, accidents, disasters or claims-making activities, creates these so-called critical discourse moments. The media’s perception of a specific incidence is also a vital part of the legitimization of a social issue as a possible social problem (Lindgren 1993: 42).

Some events provide better opportunities than others for claims-makers or moral entrepreneurs to have their ideas advanced in media coverage. According to Nord and Strömbäck (2005), for instance, a crisis as a social construction is highlighted and broadcasted through the media(s) with a given and specific dramaturgy, where different, yet specific, parts of the account are interplayed between a panel of experts, witnesses, authorities thought to be responsible, and the general public. This is partly because the kinds of competitors, or actors seeking and/or receiving media attention, will vary in accordance to the critical discourse moment or according to how central these claims-makers or entrepreneurs are constructed with regard to the particular incidence. As the media tends to favor more mainstream narratives above opposing ideas or more radical claims, diverse claims-makers and moral entrepreneurs receive different discursive opportunities during the same historical moment (Cf. Nord and Strömbäck 2005; Carmauër and Norstedt eds. 2006). The size of the discursive opportunity and the amount of media coverage available to specific claims-makers or moral entrepreneurs tend to vary in accordance with journalistic principles and practices, and how the newsworthiness of a specific issue is conceptualized. Typically, the media also tends to favor certain commentators above others and is eager to represent contrasting stances and balance reports, and possible controversy is often reduced to two competing positions (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 8 and Best 2008: 129ff).¹⁶ The way a specific social problem is constructed and brought

¹⁶ This “balance norm” leads to rather non-controversial debates between well-established parties. For instance, Republicans versus Democrats (see Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 8) or between representatives from the Swedish Socialdemokraterna and Moderaterna/Allianspartierna or their Norwegian counterparts Arbeiderpartiet and Høyre.

forward is hence a process molded by the media (Cf. Gamson and Modigliani, 1989: 7-9).

The media presents a specific issue as an organized set of ideas or as a package, which consists of coherent views on the specific social problem, for example a specific frame or root cause(s), how the problem is best dealt with, a call for action (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 3f and Best 2008: 142-149). Packages are part and parcel of the programs of governing discussed earlier. Calls for actions or claims often come packaged or framed in a “landmark narrative form” (Best 1990) or as “formula narratives” (Loseke 1992, 2003), where striking and dominant features are painted and carved out.

By drawing on popular symbols or larger cultural themes, such as myths or folktales, the “claims package” resonance cultural references of more general character and therefore seem more appealing to the general public (see Best 1990; Gamson and Modigliani 1989 and also Lindgren 1993 for similar discussion). According to Lindgren (1993), the public arenas, such as the media, endorse dramatically packaged social problems, and the more striking the issue at hand is presented the more publicity it will get (Ibid: 50). In order for a package to remain workable or successful over time it needs to evolve and progress, and include new elements as part of its core narrative. The development of a specific social problem is to be seen as a “value added process” (Gamson and Modigliani 1989:5). Yet, since this process draws on popular ideas and images the packaging within the media narratives risks conveying or reproducing stereotype representations of groups or subjects (see e.g., Brune 2008 and Elmeroth 2008).

These changes and re-conceptualizations are also products of advocates or claimants (claims-makers such as NGOs or lobby groups) working to keep the issue on the public agenda. They become important sponsors in the framing or articulation of the given social problem at hand (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 7, Löfstrand 2005: 37-42).

2.4 Intersectionality

Since one of the main objectives set forth in this thesis is to analyze how unaccompanied minors become addressed and transformed into a governable space or a social problem, it seems necessary to address how they become singled out as a specific group, and in relation to specific social structures and logics. As discussed above the molding of a specific social problem in the media tends to reproduce stereotypical images. Similar images are also blended in in the programs aiming to govern a specific space or subjects such

as unaccompanied minors. In accordance with the governing of asylum seekers, I argue how the management of them are connected to the logic of securitization and exclusion. Other underlying systems of inequality might also explain the processes operating here such as, for example, how notions of ethnicity, gender, age, and class become intertwined in the problematization of the subject at hand. The intersectional lens can then prove useful in order to study how different structures of power interconnect in the construction of a subject of knowledge. Intersectionality can be defined as the study of how complex and intertwined categories and structures of power work and operate on and between subjects. Gender, class and ethnicity hence operate between and through one another, which means that they are dependent yet also interdependent categories that give different meanings when they intersect (Mattson, 2010, Hammarén 2008 and Elmeroth 2012).¹⁷

When notions of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and age are interwoven in popular narratives, stereotypical ideas of ethnic belonging, gender, sexuality, and age are often reproduced. Therefore, we risk duplicating simplistic notions of, for example, how girls versus boys act and essentially “are”, and of young children and youngsters versus adults and ideas of migrants versus Norwegian and Swedish citizens (see e.g., Mattson 2010: 42).

Our identities depend on the fact that we constantly reflect ourselves in relation to others and understand ourselves as similar or different from them. Just as important as knowing who we are becomes the act of distancing us from that which we are not (Mattson 2010: 41; Skeggs 2000; Hammarén 2008). This often conceals the fact that what we are is not given but rather flexible and fluid. The subject as such is a changeable and context-dependent being. Accordingly, discourse is a regime of truths that assign meaning in compelling yet often very predetermined ways (Mattson 2010: 29). Things could possibly be done differently, but we are inclined to think “inside the box” and act programmatically.

An important part of an intersectional analysis is to deconstruct stereotypes, knowledge taken for granted, and try to envision the positions deemed as normal and normative (Mattson 2010: 92). The normalized is usually unproblematic, made invisible and hence quite difficult either to reflect on or to

¹⁷ The intersectional angle of incidence questions how inequality is constructed between and within different groups and subjects. According to de los Reyes and Mulinari (2005) and Mattson (2010), feminist research or research on ethnicity has tended to either highlight migrant working-class men or the experiences of white middle-class women, hence ignoring the practices and experiences of black or migrated women of different backgrounds (Cf. Skeggs 2000, 2004; Amos and Parmar 1981/2013, 2011; Minh ha 1999; Mohanty 1999; Wikström 2007 and Lenz Taguchi 2009).

highlight. It is then imperative to deconstruct what normality means and what expressions or facets of the social world that are normalized.¹⁸

According to de Los Reyes and Mulinari (2005), gender, class and ethnicity are important dimensions to highlight in intersectional analysis, as they are “associated to persistent forms of inequality” (De los Reyes och Mulinari 2005:40). In this sense gender, class and ethnicity can be seen as rather stable discursive categories central to the very organization of society, to structural exploitation and repression, and evident in how material and symbolic resources are divided between groups at the individual, institutional and the structural level (Ibid: 40, see e.g., Fraser 1998 and Matsson 2010:94). Subjects and groups can, however, also resist, rearticulate and ultimately even challenge the consistency of these preconceptions.

Class positions are directly linked to the different distribution of material resources in a social space, but this inequality is also embodied and transmitted through cultural practices (Cf. Bourdieu 2000 and Skeggs 2000). Like class, gender and ethnicity are also linked to the economic system. Gender is linked because of its relationship to the division between the private and public spheres, and to a cultural and symbolic dimension where femininity is contingently reproduced as subordinate to masculinity, and where differences in wealth, ownership and income levels are unevenly distributed and reproduced between the sexes. Ethnicity though is cut ambiguously through the labor market. Just like gender it is associated to the unequal distribution of resources and privileges (positions of superiority versus subordination).

Within existing research on intersectionality scholars have tended to focus on the dimensions of class, gender and ethnicity. However, sexuality and age are also important parts of an intersectional analysis (de Los Reyes and Mulinari 2005); Matsson 2010: 94).¹⁹ With regard to my study, it is the di-

¹⁸ For instance, the normalization of white skin has made black skin visible; the black subject is always forced to relate their skin, the color or shade of it to a hierarchy of different skin colors. As whiteness has become obvious, whites do not even have words to describe their own skin color(s). (Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz and Thörn 1999). The elusiveness of the middle-class position is another example that has made the working class, the working poor and the underclass problematic (Skeggs 2000, 2004).

¹⁹ De Los Reyes and Mulinari (2005) argue that repression and injustice on the basis of sexuality cannot simultaneously to gender, class and ethnicity be linked to economic structures. According to their line of reasoning sexuality must be understood in relation to a cultural and symbolic level, where individuals are evenly distributed across and within social classes. There is reason to oppose this view of a holy trinity of gender, class and ethnicity, demonstrated by how, for instance, the dimension of sexuality become a highly material issue, which cannot be merely reduced to symbolic and cultural inequalities (Wasshede 2010: 29). Instead, the regulation of sexuality is so closely intertwined with and associated to reproduction and the regulation of the family that the question of sexuality should be considered as a core part of the socioeconomic field (Ibid. Cf. Butler 1999 for similar lines of thought considering sexualities).

mension of age that has proved to be of central importance, which I demonstrate in the analytical chapters of this thesis. Divisions separating adults from children, adults from the elderly, and children from youngsters are central to the organization of society and a concept of rights versus duties, hence also upheld and justified within laws and in policy (Cf. Andersson 2008).

2.4.1 THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD

In connection to the understanding of how unaccompanied minors are constructed as specific subjects, age and childhood must be addressed. Childhood and adulthood are to be seen as socially constructed entities. Though we tend to understand childhood as framing a specific space of time that separated the child subject from the adult and the youngster from the child, “(c)hildhood as such does not exist in a finite and identifiable form” (James et al. 1998: 27).

As stated earlier in this chapter, our understandings are related to and framed by context, time and space. Thus, it is important to talk about different childhoods (Jenks 1990. Cf. Ariès 1962/1973; Cunningham 1995), as the concept of children and childhoods are to be understood as negotiable, situational and relative concepts. However, the negotiable and situational aspects cannot be understood without an analysis of the spatial or historical context in which children live (Cf. Engebriksen 2002; 2012). Moreover, the relative concept of “child” interconnects to others such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and disability, intersecting and creating differences between groups of children. Notions of children/childhood(s) also only become meaningful in relation to opposing concepts such as adult/adulthood and parent/parenthood. These word pairs or binary oppositions point to the important power dimension working between the parent/adult subject and the child subject. Though we very often assume parent’s power and supremacy over (powerless) children, this is not to be seen as an absolute difference, instead the relationship is also negotiable, unfixed and changing, as the child transgress from a state of total dependency (infancy) into an active and autonomous being (teenager/young adult). In practice such a perception of childhood(s) also corresponds to a transition and shift in the way Western societies, as well as the field of Child Sociology, view children, for instance, from a more traditional focus, where children have been seen as incomplete, incompetent and passive objects to a perception where they instead are highlighted as active and competent agents (see e.g., James et al. 1998; Ariès 1962/1973; Dencik and Schultz Jørgensen 1999 for similar lines of argumentation).

Today, childhood is often constructed as a right that children (should) have (Gullestad 1997; Engebriksen 2002; 2012) and as a space essentially different from adulthood (Jenks 1996; Ariès 1962/1973; Cunningham 1995). Concepts of children versus childhood have become entwined and are often in practice nearly synonymous (Cf. Gullestad 1997; O’Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007 for similar lines of argumentation), indicating that elements conceived as disruptive to children’s well-being are simultaneously constructed as endangering their very essence and hence marks the end to their childhood.

2.4.2 GOVERNING THE GENDERED, CLASSED AND AGED SUBJECT

The ability of a state to govern its citizens is dependent on the construction of a governable space within which the programmatic and technological governing takes place. Within this space there are a variety of different techniques to make use of in order for the state to exercise social control (Foucault 1977; Rose 1999/2008; Johansson and Bäck-Wiklund 2012). By constructing perfect citizens — that is socializing individuals into healthy, hard-working and employable, rational consumers and honest taxpayers — a social development in accordance with the prevailing political climate is secured. These citizens are fostered into knowing that they are supposed to take care of themselves by, for example, eating a healthy diet, exercising, drinking moderately, not smoking or becoming sick or obese, be made redundant or behaving too lavishly (Cf. Johansson 2006). Official campaigns, laws and regulations are constructed in order to tell us how we should live our daily lives in accordance with official ideals. Governing is hence a double-folded practice: subjects and citizens are instructed or governed in various ways, but also taught to exercise self-control or to be self-regulating.²⁰

The state as a people fosterer is easily recognizable in the emergence of social work as a discipline, for instance: some of the first contributions were conducted in order to support working-class or poor women by upper-class women doing voluntary work (Mattson 2010). In order to participate or become the receivers of this contribution working-class women had to do services in return (*quid pro quo*) such as learning to behave decently, be sober and clean/hygienic, aspects of what Skeggs (2000) conceptualizes as respectability. In some sense the conduction of social work has always been condi-

²⁰ We come to know how we should act and detest ourselves if we fail to achieve the ideal by exercising too little or eating and drinking too much, gain too much weight, etc.

tional as needs could have been constructed differently. Jansdotter (2004) illustrates this by pointing out that while the saviors (the Bourgeois or upper-class female charitable workers) focused on the importance or need for poor women to be purified from sin and attain salvation, the beneficiaries (poor or working-class women) on the contrary were occupied with questions concerning cramped housing conditions and redundancy. Built in the social work were hence double functions, where the helping/supportive aspects and controlling/disciplining were interwoven and where the imbalance of power gave the subjects very different interpretative space. According to Edman (in Mattson 2010), social work also became a gender stratifying apparatus, as poor women and poor men were disciplined differently: working-class men were directed toward becoming hard-working bread-winners, whereas the women were expected to learn how to become caregivers” by being taught how to keep a house, cook and clean and economize. Mattson (2010) and Skeggs (2000) label this as an exercise of class-related power. Such conduct is also comparable to how, for instance, ideas of gender, class and sexuality and racial biology have legitimized the forced sterilization of 60,000 women (a majority of them were low-skilled travelers of Romani origin) in Sweden (but also in Norway) as part of the creation of a healthy society and the ambition to enhance the well-being of the Swedish society at large (Mattson 2010: 102).

Historically the state has also turned its gaze toward families and family life in ways that regulate and discipline individual subjects’ scope for action. The governing of family life has concurrently become a space where a family’s ability to take care of their offspring and discipline or foster them is put to the test or questioned (Johansson and Bäck-Wiklund 2012: 12-14). Deviant behavior or child disorders have been categorized as specific problems that only official solutions can cure, either by presenting different intervention programs or by changing parental behavior toward their children.²¹ Rose (1999/2008) suggests that children and childhood have become one of modern time society’s most regulated spaces.

In everyday life thoughts on fostering are also interconnected to the instant of care, and both can be articulated as central components of children and youngsters’ socialization. As a social practice, giving care implies not only meeting someone else’s needs, but also to perceiving and articulating these needs and hence responding to them accordingly (Nordenfors 2012). To give care implies “to negotiate on how and whom that is to answer to these needs”. Care can then be described as a relational activity where morals,

²¹ Jesper Juul, David Eberhard, “nanny-methods” are some of the many different current examples of temporary programs aimed at fostering parents and families.

sense and sensibility are important components (Nordenfors 2012: 74). In accordance with how working-class women defined their needs differently from the way the saviors constructed them, needs as such are neither objective nor a priori defined. Central to the Swedish and Norwegian reception of unaccompanied minors are the construction of care and needs, which must be conceived as legitimate to not only address (and by whom) how and what care to give but also how to go about it in order to discipline or foster the unaccompanied children and youngsters.²²

2.5 An eclectic theoretical model

In this chapter, I present an eclectic theoretical framework for the analysis of the discourse on unaccompanied minors, including claims about the governing of this group.

Different statements and subject positions are historically and contextually variable and dependent. The discourse on unaccompanied minors does also contain rather opposing positions, dichotomies and ambivalences. The concept of ambivalence is in this sense a useful tool in order to analyze how tension, contradictions and conflicts operate within the discourse.

Furthermore, I will link my discursive framework to my understanding of governing, which implies the act of transforming specific social dimensions into governable spaces: making things sayable (the intervention of governable spaces) yet also doable (making the spaces governable). The creation of a governable space is hence connected to the two dimensions: programs of governing and technological governing. Programs of governing refer to the specific articulation or problematization of a specific social problem and the solutions to the problem at hand, and to an articulation of legitimacy that renders that particular space governable. Technological governing is connected to the schemes, operations and techniques developed in order to make governing happen in practice and at various levels of society.

Another important concept is that of critical discursive moments, which highlight the media's role in the problematization process or construction of social problems. These moments give opportunities to highlight specific

²² There is also a possible interplay between the supportive activities or the contributions that are more oriented toward giving care versus the different ways that unaccompanied minors are controlled or regulated. Fostering versus more care-oriented practices might also prove to be far more parallel activities and not necessarily mutually exclusive categories.

questions on a media agenda, which in turn offers discursive openings in order to conceptualize events or social phenomena in specific ways.

Such processes point to the importance of analyzing how different social phenomena are framed as specific social problems, therefore making calls for appropriate actions and solutions (programs of governing) legitimate. Media (discourse) plays an important role as it lays the groundwork for public opinion. To understand how a certain social problem such as “unaccompanied minors” becomes articulated or framed in a specific context, it is thus important to study the content of media articulations, as well as the national (official) responses formulated in policy. The articulation of a social problem is also done with reference to other interrelated concepts. In order to fully grasp how unaccompanied minors are conceptualized or transformed into a governable space, it is vital to understand how notions of age, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability interconnect, create distinction between children and work to frame the unaccompanied minor as a specific subject of knowledge. The intersectional lens can then aid the understanding of how different structures of power intersect in the official articulations and subject’s own positioning.

The analysis of governing makes it possible to study how programs of governing are articulated and put into action through technologies within the circuits of exclusion that render a specific form of governing or management possible. By comparing the official problematizations articulated within policy and the media, with the experiences of governing and monitoring narrated by unaccompanied minors and the people involved in their daily life (e.g., teachers, HVB staff, foster parents, guardians), the process of translation (governing at distance) and the impact of “disciplinary power” (Cf. Foucault 1978/79) on different subjects can be analyzed.

3

Method and material(s)

In this chapter, one of my central aims is to explain why I have chosen the empirical material I analyze in this thesis, and how I went about it in order to collect it. Firstly, it is necessary to discuss the process of data gathering and my selection criteria. The fact that material such as newspaper articles, national policy documents and interviews are different data sources is something that I also deliberate on. Another issue at stake in this chapter is how I went about the analysis in practice. Secondly, I provide a thorough description of my methodological tool: the discourse analysis, while focusing on the more technical and concrete parts of such a conduct or how I went about piloting one. Thirdly, I critically explore and further evaluate discussions on the validity of my study, and ethical considerations or dilemmas that research on vulnerable groups challenge.

3.1 Why compare the Swedish and Norwegian official and media discourse, and why analyze the case of the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR) reception of unaccompanied minors?

As I state in the previous chapter, our knowledge should be perceived as discursively constructed, as social knowledge — whether the difference between adults and children or inherent ideas about gender, age or ethnic belonging — is presented as rather familiar and regular beliefs. This makes it difficult to properly dissect these beliefs' inherent meaning(s) and to critically look at their implications (Cf. Matsson 2010). As they are often taken for granted, these norms, values or “outlooks” are often apparent or put to the test in contexts of social change (Hellum 2002). In order to study social transformation the researcher can choose to analyze how a specific phenomenon

progresses over time, for instance.²³ Yet, instead of analyzing how meaning changes historically one might also look at how meaning is upheld between different contexts during one specific period. In the context of a broader Europe striving for deeper policy coordination among the different EU member countries, I will argue that such processes serve as fruitful backdrops in order to study how official articulations on a variety of social issues are put to the fore when the harmonization of national policies is on the political agenda. In the context of harmonizing asylum and migration politics, the different EU member states are made to negotiate, assess and even re-evaluate some of their official conceptualizations.

One critical discursive moment that had consequences for both the Swedish and Norwegian articulations on asylum was the European Council's summit in Tampere in October 1999, when the construction of a Common European Asylum System was formalized (Cf. Hansen 2008). This work involved an agreement on cooperation in order to crack down on organized crime, but also the creation of common procedures for granting refugees permanent and temporary protected status and the enhancement of the rights of long-term residents from non-EU countries. According to Hansen (2008), merging discussions concerning organized crime with concepts such as asylum seekers, refugees and non-EU citizens colors the asylum discourse as such. As I argue in Chapter 1, this is also expressed in how the political debate concerning asylum has become entwined with a debate concerning securitization, where migrants are ambivalently viewed as possible sufferers in need of help, but also as potential bogus asylum seekers constructed as safety risks. In the years following the Tampere summit, the debate concerning asylum have been a highly politicized and ongoing one in many European countries. The post-Schengen Agreement period (after 2001) has also been a time where scholars argue that Sweden, often praised for having a scheme of rather generous migrations policies in comparison to other European countries, has chosen to adopt a much more restrictive asylum regime as part of the EU harmonization process (Castels, Schierup and Hansen 2006). In both Norway and Sweden, the period between 2000-2010 has also been one marked by rather restrictive asylum practice, mass rejections and the implementation (or discussions of the implementation) of biometrical age assessment tests, yet one where amnesties have sometimes been offered unaccom-

²³ Within the classical work of Foucault (1972, 1977, 1993, 2002), this method has become synonymous with a kind of genealogical exploration (see Foucault, 1977. See also Bergström and Boréus, 2000: 238-242). In the "Histoire de la sexualité" (2002), for instance, Foucault dissects the relationship between the power of knowledge and the way society talks of sexuality in different historical epochs.

panied minors or asylum-seeking families (Tamas 2009; Eastmond and Ascher 2011; Holgersson 2011).

According to Wieviorka (1992/2000), a comparison between two cases can be fruitfully conducted when and if significant similarities and distinct dissimilarities can be identified between the two. In the following section I will argue that Norway and Sweden are two cases that have such significant similarities and dissimilarities needed in order for a comparative analysis to be conducted.

Since I wanted to conduct an analysis of the way Norway and Sweden understand and develop their reception of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors, I decided to limit my analysis of policy papers to the 10 years after Tampere: 2000-2010. This 10-year period is chosen much in relation to how both Sweden and Norway formulated an official reception of unaccompanied minors. As I explain in Chapter 1, Sweden and Norway are interesting cases in that they have chosen to relate themselves to the EU in quite distinguished ways: Sweden decided to become a member of the European Union and hence open its borders to the free flows of capital, goods, services, and people associated with the construction of the inner market, while Norway decided not to do so. Yet, as members of the Schengen Agreement and by ratifying the Dublin convention, both Norway and Sweden are obliged to take joint steps in order to harmonize their national strategies, border controls and policies with regard to third-country citizens/nationals.

Family-oriented policies and children's rights are issues considered central to the way the Social democratic model of welfare distribution is and has been articulated. Sweden is often described as "a vanguard of modernism and progress and a social, political, and economical role model for other countries" (Larsson, Letell and Thörn 2012; 6; Larsson 2001;). This also corresponds to a popular national self-narration, where both Sweden and Norway tend to recognize themselves in a quite undisputed and in parallel often unquestioned fashion as the world's best countries to live in (Cf. Gullestad 1997:22 Eastmond and Ascher 2011).²⁴ According to Johansson (2006), this is also very much the case with regard to the Swedish self-narration as a much more generous asylum regime in comparison to other EU members (Cf. Wettergren 2013).

²⁴ Not to argue whether Norway and Sweden actually might or might not be "good countries" to live in, but rather to question the sometimes explicit and always implicit assumption that they always are. As an "exile-Norwegian" brought up in a country so eager to narrate its national self as the "number one country in the world", and to then come to Sweden to find that Swedes have been brought up believing that it is Sweden that is essentially the best, has really helped to visualize how this underlining self-imaging operates at multi-levels of Swedish and Norwegian society, legitimizing the system as such.

Sweden and Norway are distinguishable as examples of what Esping-Andersen (1990; 1999) amongst others considers as the traditionally “social democratic” regime clusters (Schierup, Castels and Hansen 2006). From a more child-oriented point of view possible differences between them also surface: Norway has chosen to make the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) a part of Norwegian law, while Sweden has decided not to do so. In Chapter 1, I argue that restrictive schemes toward asylum migration or the migration of third nationals can easily collide with the best interests of any given child (Watters 2008; Eide and Broch 2010; Lundberg 2009, 2013; Andersson et al. 2010; Vitus 2011). I claim that the Norwegian and Swedish balancing act between rather incommensurable stands make them interesting cases to analyze with regard to their national/official articulation of unaccompanied minors, how they deal with them and important issues in relation to the reception of this group.

The debate concerning unaccompanied minors has also been an ongoing one in both the Swedish and Norwegian media. This also makes it interesting to study how the media address unaccompanied minors as a social problem and what kind of claims for social action have been made in this regard. By analyzing and comparing the official (policy) with the public (media) understandings in Norway and Sweden, I hope to demonstrate how unaccompanied minors are concurrently articulated as a subject of knowledge and how they are transformed into a governable space, to be handled or monitored according to the official and public articulations. With regard to the media analysis, the years between 2000 until mid-2008 have been the focus.

As I highlighted in the previous chapter, official representation and media images have real consequences for the subject, especially when they become part of an official solution, imbedded in a program of governing. This also motivates the researcher to strive to analyze the images put to the fore in national policy and the media in comparison to how the subject targeted by such ideas narrates their experiences. In addition, and in order to understand how programmatic governing works in practice, an analysis of the micro context seems justified. In this regard I have had the chance to include a selection of interviews conducted with youngsters categorized as unaccompanied minors and a selection of important officials and support staff active in what I categorize, in Chapter 1, as the social and regional/municipal part of the Swedish reception system (the social dimension) that aims to provide unaccompanied minors care and support in their everyday life.

3.2 Criteria of selection and how I went about collecting data

In this section, I discuss how I chose — criteria of selections — the different newspaper articles, policy documents and interviews that I analyzed and how I went about collecting them (the search, collection and selection process). With regard to the interviews this is also a question of how I made contact with all possible informants and recruited all interviewees, and also of how the interviews were conducted.

3.2.1 Newspaper articles

Public discourse, as “a set of discourses that interact in different ways” (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989:2), is carried out in many and rather diverse media forums. Although daily newspapers have lost many of their readers during the last 20 years (Cf. Larsson 2001, Best 2008: 132ff), Scandinavian countries (in comparison to other European or Western countries) have a high percentage of people who still read them on a daily basis (Ibid). However, many newspapers have also been made accessible in web-based versions, also more recently as mobile apps, and have become part of the new and expanding market for claims-making: on the Internet. Newspapers, whether they are consumed in paper format at home, read on a tablet, smart phone or on the computer screen, may still function as an important agenda setter in society. In the web-based format, the national daily newspaper has also become globally accessible.

In order to analyze how unaccompanied children have been made comprehensible in the media discourse in a comparative perspective, early in my project I made the decision to narrow my media focus to only include newspapers. Due to the expansion of the Internet newspapers have been made available and easily accessible from online archives. Studying newspaper articles hence made it easier for me to obtain and collect data retrospectively (see e.g., Larsson, 2001: 228f for similar lines of argumentation).

Central to the collection of newspaper articles was to discover a broad selection of articles that included stories and narratives of unaccompanied children. I decided to pick my articles from the biggest national newspapers according to the number of daily circulation issues (7 days a week distribution). From the Swedish context my collection of articles was retrieved from *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen*, and *Göteborgs-Posten*, which were the four largest newspapers according to daily circulation in 2008 when I

sampled my articles.²⁵ In the Norwegian context I decided to examine articles from Verdens Gang, Aftenposten morning and evening editions, and Dagbladet, as these were considered the top three Norwegian newspapers with a national range at the time. (In reality the Norwegian sample consists of four newspapers as Aftenposten morning and evening editions are two separate papers, the former in a wide classical format, while the latter more of a tabloid).²⁶ Firstly, I searched the newspapers' own Internet archives, but as such archives were often of quite varying quality and sometimes had a rather restricted admission, I secondly, searched for articles through other online press archives (such as Mediarkivet and Presstext).²⁷ Cf. <http://www.ub.gu.se/sok/dagstidningar/>). I further narrowed my search to articles circulated between 00.01.01 until 08.08.01.

Due to the expansion of Internet services during the last couple of years, and the way the different newspapers had decided to distribute their articles freely in different online archives, I came up with a sample containing more articles from the period 2004-2008 than from 2000-2003. The sample also consisted of more articles originating from the Swedish newspapers (due to Mediarkivet and Retriever providing me with some extra Swedish articles recourses) than I have from Norwegian newspapers (see Table of references and materials for an overview of the article sample). Initially, I did broad and more general searches on articles containing words such as "asylum-seeking children", "unaccompanied minor(s)", and "unaccompanied and asylum". It soon became clear that from 2000-2008 newspaper narratives on "asylum-seeking minors" almost without exception also included cases containing storylines of missing children. As my study and the knowledge of my field transgressed, I was able to refine my search criteria to also include searches on "children vanishing/missing", "asylum", "trafficking and child/minor", "smuggling and child/minor", and so on, and to specific events, names and even time periods and dates (precise and more exact key words) where narratives of unaccompanied children were present in the Swedish and Norwegian media. Singling out specific dates and events or discursive moments became

²⁵ According to Tidningsstatistik AB (2007), Aftenbladet had 388,500 circulated daily editions in Sweden, DN/Dagens Nyheter had 339,700, Expressen (including GT and Kvällsposten) had 303,100, and Göteborgs-Posten had 245,000, making it the fourth most read Swedish paper (http://www.ts.se/public/PDF/Upplygestatistik/dags_08_22feb.pdf).

²⁶ According to the Norwegian Media Authority (2006), the VG/Verdens Gang had a circulation of 315,549 net editions, the Aftenposten morning publications came in 248,503 net editions, the evening publication in 137, 141 net editions, and the Dagbladet in 146,12 net editions ([http://medieforvaltning-no.inforce.dk/sw4066.asp](http://medieforvaltning.no.inforce.dk/sw4066.asp)).

²⁷ Mediarkivet is a Swedish article resource that also contains some Norwegian newspapers in its article sample (Aftenposten and Verdens Gang). Presstext, on the other hand, has a selection of Swedish articles with a focus on editorials and debate articles.

part of my undertaking. Initially in this analysis, I used the total of articles that I could find that in one way or another mentioned or were related to “asylum-seeking” or “unaccompanied children”. I later decided to focus on analyzing the stories of missing asylum-seeking children and deselected five articles that mentioned unaccompanied minors without any reference to cases of missings (*spårslöst forsvunnet/spårlöst borta*) or unaccompanied minors who had gone awol (*avviket*) from public care, after entering a new country and claiming asylum there. My sample of newspaper articles hence came to consist of a total of 158 newspaper articles (a nearly total sample, minus the five articles that were deselected). The spectre of articles in my selection consists of a few debate articles, some editorials, but mostly news-related material retrieved from the news section of the papers.²⁸

3.2.2 Official documents (policy)

My initial narrow focus on missing asylum-seeking children proved to be a somewhat constricted search criterion in relation to policy. When it came to gathering official documents, reports, national reports, plans of action, directives, and guidelines, I decided to get as wide a range as possible of documents that said something about the more general practice of unaccompanied and asylum-seeking youngsters and children. Whereas the “missing-children-incidence” was the media’s preferred angle of incidence, the official documents had a much wider outlook on issues associated to unaccompanied minors.

The sample of documents that I labeled “policy” (see Tables of references and materials) constitute a broad selection of rather diverse documents. For instance, the “national report” sets forth as its goal to investigate or gather more information on a specific topic, and a “plan for action” on the contrary are to be understood as a more detailed scheme or a specific method with well formulated objectives for attaining a goal (Cf. the Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*), Sweden’s National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (*SKL*) and The Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), and their joint national call for action on the reception of unaccompanied minors

²⁸ In the Norwegian online archives, I searched words such as asyl and barn/ungdommer/asylbarn, asylbarn, and sporløst/forsvinner. Trafficking/smuggling and asylbarn/asyl, kineser/Kina and asyl/forsvinner, “Vårlikandalen”, “mottak for enslige asylsøkende barn”, etc. In the Swedish context, I did similar searches on words such as asyl and underårig/barn/ensamkommande, and asyl and avviker/forsvinner/spårlöst, but also on “Carlslund”, “avviker från förläggning”, trafficking/smuggling and barn/ungdommar, etc. The Norwegian and Swedish articles were retrieved between February 2007 and August 2008.

2012). Such action plans are often formulated in the aftermath of the national report or when the government has created new laws and regulations. Action plans often point to new and more intentional, rational or necessary conduct. Other policy data in my sample are of an internal character, intended as informative circulars and expressing the authorities' definite position on a specific issue, ultimately instructing its workers how to best collaborate according to these leading principles (see e.g., the different circulars from the UDI in Norway: UDI 1999, UDI 2000a, UDI 2000b, UDI 2001/2008, UDI 2002a, UDI 2002b, etc.). The official documents included in the analysis of policy were all published during 2000-2010. What the materials labeled as "policy" have in common is that in them different official understandings or problematizations are put to the fore and solutions to the problems are presented.

One can argue whether policy documents represent the "real" effort by a given country or institution on a specific topic. Policy, in the wide definition that I have chosen to use, comprises an important authoritative tone of voice, as it gives indications of what should be done with regard to a governable space or subject. In my understanding, policies are instruments of different kinds aimed to target a specific phenomenon or a group, often in order to exercise some sort of authority or governing. The construction of policies are part of the making of governable space, that is the articulation of problems and how to deal with them and formulate action, schemes and so forth in order to obtain a desired goal and govern in practice. In this sense, policy expresses a given problematization and how practice henceforth should be formulated in order to best handle the phenomenon in question.

The difference between the various documents (reports by different institutional bodies, national reports, circulations etc.) is more an expression of shape rather than substance, as they overlap and resemble each other: reports, circulars, plans of action, and so forth expose the official solutions to a problem, how to perform tasks according to general guiding principles, and it speaks of intentions and objectives that have real consequences when brought into action.

In this context it is also important to bring to mind that the aim of this study is not to analyze the accuracy of certain topics in relation to others. Instead, the focus is to dissect the ways meaning are presented within specific texts/contexts, what underlying systems of beliefs that are expressed within them and the social implications of such perceptions (see e.g., Sahlin, 1999: 90 for similar reasoning).

With regard to the policy analysis, I have systematically gathered a rather comprehensive sample of documents and text from the Swedish and Norwe-

gian government, the Swedish Migration Board, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (*UDI*), the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (*Bufetat*), Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), and SKL with regard to unaccompanied minors. I have also gathered some reports and documents conducted by other actors involved in the national conceptualization and governing of unaccompanied minors (e.g., Allmänna Arvsfonden 2007; Institut for samfunnsforskning/Lidén 2008; Unicef 2010; Överförmyndaren 2010). In searching for documents or text to collect in my sample I have selected those documents that explicitly or inherently are relevant to the reception of unaccompanied minors. Searches have been conducted through the different authorities and organizations' official document databases (searchable on the Internet), and keywords have included: "children" and/or "asylum", "under-age", "migration", "trafficking", "smuggling", "refugee" or simply "unaccompanied minors", "unaccompanied asylum-seeking children", "unaccompanied refugees", and "reception". This left me with a total of approximately 90 different papers, text and documents from the period 2000-2010. As in the case of the newspaper sample, I have more material originating from 2005 onwards than from before 2004.

3.2.3 Interview data

In order to analyze official understandings imbedded in the programs of governing and how they become translated into various segments of society, an analysis of the micro context seems justified. During the summer of 2011 until early winter 2012, I was able to, together with my co-worker Charlotte Melander and our research assistant Lejla Mesinovic, conduct a series of interviews, including youngsters who shared the experience of being categorized as unaccompanied minors and a group of people working as various types of caregivers located in the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR).²⁹ The group of caregivers interviewed were all working in important segments of what can be argued to be the cornerstones of the Swedish municipal reception of unaccompanied minors, comprising of different housing services, the local social service, school system and healthcare sector, including officially appointed private foster homes and custodians (Cf.

²⁹ The GR is a cooperative organization uniting 13 municipalities in western Sweden. The member municipalities are Ale, Alingsås, Göteborg, Härryda, Kungsbacka, Kungälv, Lerum, Lilla Edet, Mölndal, Partille, Stenungsund, Tjörn, and Öckerö. The association aims to promote networks, cooperation and the exchange of ideas between the different municipalities.

Migrationsverket, SKL, Skolverket, Länsstyrelserna och Socialstyrelsen 2012; Socialstyrelsen 2013a and 2013b).

The consequences of the changes of modes of conduct at the national level in Sweden by July 1, 2006 were evident in the GR, where the municipal of Mölndal, was suddenly transformed into one of four (later this was extended to one of nine) national arrival municipalities (*ankomstkommun* or *mottagningskommun*) in Sweden.³⁰ In an arrival municipality newly arrived unaccompanied minors are expected to submit their claim for asylum, are appointed a guardian/custodian³¹ and anticipate further relocation in another municipality (*anvisningskommun*) with whom the Swedish Migration Board (a responsibility that by 2011 became the task of the County Councils (*Länsstyrelsen*) had written a reception agreement. In the so-called *anvisningskommun* the children are to receive appropriate housing, be enrolled in the school system and wait there while their asylum cases are processed. If the child later on receives a residence permit in Sweden it then becomes the long-term commitment and responsibility of the *anvisningskommun* to enhance the unaccompanied child's further integration in Sweden (until the child turns 18 or, if enrolled in the upper secondary school system, until the age of 21). This illustrates how the Swedish system mode change at the national level came to involve processes of responsabilization, as it made a brand of new actors involved and responsible for the handling and governing of unaccompanied minors. The creation of a novel reception system involved, for example, the responsabilization of the municipal social service, the school system, it opened a space for the development of new private and public HVB facilities aimed at unaccompanied minors, and involved appointing custodians and foster homes, and engaging the healthcare sector.

The change of conduct also involved numerous unexpected challenges that the new actors suddenly were forced to face. One such problem was how to cater to unaccompanied minors experiencing lengthy asylum processes or children and youngsters who had their claims rejected but were not deported from Sweden, as Sweden rarely sends children to their country of origin (or a third country) if a safe re-settling cannot be guaranteed.³² The arrival municipi-

³⁰ These four reception municipalities originally consisted of Sigtuna, Solna, Malmö and Mölndal. Since 2007, the municipalities of Örebro, Norrköping, Gävle, Skellefteå, and Umeå have also become so-called *ankomstkommuner*.

³¹ When an unaccompanied minor submits an asylum application without being appointed a guardian/custodian the Swedish Migration Board will accept the application, but cannot start processing it until it has been approved by a custodian/guardian or public counsel (a lawyer).

³² This is not to say that unaccompanied minors who have their claims rejected are never deported from Sweden. According to Stretmo and Melander (2013), approximately 10 out of the 154 unaccompanied minors

pality of Mölndal, like the other Swedish arriving municipalities, were often filled to capacity with children and youngsters that could not be transferred to a *anvisningskommun* because the number of agreements made between the Swedish Migration Board and the municipalities rarely added up to the number of newly arrived children and youngsters (Cf. Stretmo and Melander 2013). This created different vacuum spaces for the children and youngsters categorized as unaccompanied minors and for those working with them daily. Such experiences hence make a region such as the GR an interesting backdrop/contextualization in order to understand the implications of national articulations on those directly categorized and labeled by them.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to conduct a similar study in a Norwegian region or municipality, though this would have shed important insights to the overall comparison and analysis conducted here.

The interviews that we conducted included 10 youngsters who arrived in Sweden as unaccompanied minors, and a broad selection of caregivers active as either support staff (such as custodians, foster parents and staff members working in different HVB units) and officials (such as social workers, teachers, pedagogues, and different healthcare professionals). In total, we interviewed 80 different actors involved in what I in Chapter 1 labeled the “social dimension” of the Swedish regional/municipal reception system of unaccompanied minors. Charlotte Melander, Lejla Mesinovic and I collected the sample of the 48 single and group interviews during the summer of 2011 until early winter 2012. While Charlotte conducted the majority of the 48 interviews, I conducted and participated in the gathering of 14 of them, and our project assistant Lejla Mesinovic conducted one. The majority of the interviews were conducted as focus groups while others were conducted one-on-one.

Focus group interviews involve a group of people (i.e., more than one respondent or interviewee) chosen to reflect on or discuss explicit issues or topics. Interviews conducted in focus groups often work well in order to discover the discursive range because the repertoire of possible legitimate interpretations are highlighted when people talk (Börjesson and Palmblad 2007: 17). Such speech acts are of course also conducted in the one-on-one conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee in the traditional single interview. The discursive range is analyzed whenever the interviewer is included in the analysis, as a subject actively involved in the interpretive process that comes forth during the interview.

who arrived in the GR during 2008 were deported from Sweden. While the majority of them were above 18 years when the deportation was executed some of them were de facto small children (Ibid).

3.2.3.1 The selection and recruitment of interviewees

In order to get a broad selection of officials and support staff to interview, we chose to engage people working directly with and for unaccompanied minors such as social workers, teachers, healthcare providers, custodians, foster parents, and home for care and housing (HVB) staff in special units aimed at catering to unaccompanied minors. We conducted quantitatively more interviews with teachers and pedagogues, people working at HVB homes, and the social service than with custodians and people involved in the public healthcare sector, where we had to rely on a snowball sample to gain entrance. We also had to rely on a snowball sample when it came to recruiting youngsters and young adults for our study, as they (like many of the social groups considered as vulnerables) are protected by many gatekeepers (Cf. Wernesjö 2014 for similar lines of reasoning).

We came in contact with and conducted interviews with a total of 13 social workers. The majority had a rather extensive experience of doing social work and several had also worked with refugees or unaccompanied children for a long time.

We also conducted 7 interviews with 16 teachers and pedagogues involved in the introductory school programs aimed at newly or late arriving children (*sent anlända* or *nyanlända barn*) in two junior high and five secondary schools. Two of the secondary schools were situated in Gothenburg and the other five in the three rural municipalities.

Newly arrived migrant children in Sweden are divided into different learning groups based on their knowledge of the Swedish language and their previous educational background. Children under 15 years of age are enrolled in introductory classes in elementary school, while older children are channeled into introductory classes with the aim of achieving further secondary education. As the majority of unaccompanied children arriving in Sweden are in their teens, we hence chose to focus on teachers and pedagogues working in the junior high and secondary school levels. The teaching staff in our sample include a rather heterogeneous group of teachers. A few were newly qualified (primary or secondary) teachers, while the majority had a rather lengthy experience of the teaching profession. Some had, for instance, an extended experience of working with language training for migrant adults (SFI/Swedish language training for migrants), as well as with newly arrived children and youngsters. A few of the teachers were primarily single subject teachers and some were special education teachers, whereas others had more of an assistant function. The sample also included a headmaster and a school counsellor.

We conducted eight group interviews in five different private, semi-private (companies operating on municipal initiatives such as Gryning Vård AB) and public operated HVB facilities specializing in the reception of unaccompanied children. The 23 employees we interviewed had different positions. A few held managerial positions whereas the majority were ordinary staff or were employed as social pedagogues. Some of the employees had lengthy experience working with refugees, refugee families or children and young people, while others had graduated recently. The majority of HVB facilities were aimed at young boys (only one institution had only girl residents and one was mixed), some were rather large institutions catering to more than 30 resident minors, and others were small and more home-like facilities catering a total of three inhabitants. We also conducted interviews with six different foster parents, including an interview with a network family home (i.e., the foster home had kinship ties to the unaccompanied child).

When it came to the recruitment of custodians, we had to rely on the Save the Children network in order to make contact. Four interviews with a total of seven individuals were carried out during autumn 2011: two group interviews and two single interviews were conducted. Among the custodians interviewed were people with training in fields such as pedagogy, law and social work, and many had/were working with youngsters and/or people who had come to Sweden as refugees.

The public healthcare sector was the one actor that proved to be the most difficult to get in contact with and where our study became more exploratory compared to the other interviews. The healthcare professionals that we did manage to recruit were active in different segments of public healthcare and held different positions there. We interviewed a psychologist working at a child psychiatry unit in Gothenburg, a special team working with children with refugee backgrounds consisting of a psychologist, a paediatrician and a staff nurse, a nurse that implements obligatory health checks on newly arrived asylum seekers, and school health teams consisting of school nurses, counsellors and special education teachers at four different schools. A total of 8 interviews with 15 different healthcare professionals and caregivers were carried out.

During the fall of 2011 and winter of 2012, we also managed to contact a total of 10 youngsters and young adults who had arrived Sweden as unaccompanied children, with whom we conducted eight individual interviews and one group interview. These 10 youngsters were recruited either through their HVB staff, custodians or teachers, some of which we had already interviewed. The staff, custodians and teachers had been asked to give the youngsters a short information pamphlet describing our study (this information was

translated into Persian, Arabian, Dari, Somali, and Sorani), and our contact information (appendix I)³³. Four young people were reached through their teachers (who we also interviewed), two through their custodians (who themselves had been interviewed), and four through two different HVB homes (of which we had interviewed one). What became clear from this was that in order to get in contact with the youngsters we first had to have won the confidence of officials and support staff acting as their gatekeepers.

The young people interviewed were in their late teens or older and between the ages of 15-21. Eight of them had already resided in Sweden for many years and had obtained their permanent residence permits long ago. Nevertheless, one of the boys had arrived only within the year prior to the interview and yet another young man, who had resided in Sweden for three years, was still awaiting an appeal on his asylum application. The group consisted of three girls and seven boys, one of the youngsters originated from Iraq, four of them had a Somali background, and five came from Afghanistan. Three of the Afghan youngsters had spent most of their childhood years as irregular migrants in Iran. One group interview was conducted with two Somali boys and whereas the majority of the interviews were conducted with only the interviewer and interviewee present, a translator mediated two of the single interviews.

3.2.3.2 The interviews

Thirty-eight interviews were conducted with a total of 80 officials and support staff focusing on what the interviewees articulated as important parts of their everyday encounter and work with unaccompanied minors and how they perceived their role in the reception of minors, but also what they saw as important challenges and difficulties. The interviews were directed around a semi-structured interview guide (see appendix III for the Swedish interview guide for officials and support staff). The group, as well as individual interviews, tended to become to some extent a bit problem-oriented, both as a result of the fact that the interviews were conducted as part of a study aiming at organizational development,³⁴ but also because the interviewees often came to frame their narration on issues related to unaccompanied minors from a problem-oriented viewpoint.

The nine interviews conducted with the 10 youngsters came more to dwell on their experiences of the reception system and asylum process as such, and how they made sense of their everyday life and important relation-

³³ The caregivers were also given an information pamphlet describing our study (appendix II).

³⁴ The interviews were intended as part of a so-called research and development study.

ships (here and there). A semi-structural interview guide (see the appendix IV) for the Swedish interview guide aimed at youngsters) that thematized different aspects of their everyday life such as the home (whether the home was a foster home or at a home for caring or housing), and school and learning conditions was used in both the interviews with officials, practitioners and youngsters. Other themes such as ethnicity, age, gender, and the asylum system, for example, were highlighted by the interviewees during the conversations.

The two interview guides served as conversation starters. Rather than to strictly direct the discussion/dialogue that took place during the interviews, the guides served as a tool to help us as interviewers to keep the conversation going and to offer helpful key themes in order to retain the dialogue. The guides also evolved a bit from the first interviews conducted until the last, as we gained more relevant knowledge of all the functions involved in the reception of unaccompanied children.

When talking to unaccompanied minors we sometimes had to use translators. The translator was instructed to translate as accurately as possible the content of the young person's response. The translation process as such is an aspect you as a researcher really do not control in practice (see e.g., Andersson 2010, Malmsten 2012 and Backlund et al. 2012 for similar lines of reasoning). The translators used were contacted through the *Tolkcentralen* and were qualified translators. According to Keselman (2013), the accuracy of the translation is much more precise when the translation is conducted by a qualified translator. Sometimes we conducted interviews with unaccompanied children without a translator present. With some this worked satisfactorily but with others this was problematic, as the unaccompanied youngsters had a really hard time verbalizing their experiences because they were not fluent enough in Swedish, and of course because Charlotte and my knowledge of Dari, Somali, Parsi, and Persian was non-existent. To make use of a translator or not is hence a dilemma that is difficult to overcome in practice. Instead, we worked hard to clarify ambiguities as the interviews passed in order to make sure we had understood each other.

The interviews were recorded on MP3 devices and were later transcribed into text by a research assistant who had been instructed to make the transcripts of the vocal dialogue as accurate as possible. Unfortunately, the transcripts are not always as detailed as I would have liked, as deciding who's interrupting whom and how to transcribe when people talk simultaneously are part of the active choices a process of transcription involves (Cf. Uhnoo 2011). Therefore, it can be difficult to study interaction patterns in the dialogue retrospectively if the transcription is done too lightly. Due to the exten-

sive number of interviews and the lack of time, the assistance was necessary in order to have all of the interviews transformed into text. (I have hence also tried to listen to the recorded interview if I have doubted the transcript.)

3.3 Comments on analyzing different materials

Research conducted within the field of discourse analysis assumes that different texts or documents can be analyzed or treated as if they had equal weight (see Palmblad and Börjesson 2007: 16-19). In my thesis, official policy papers, newspaper articles and interview transcripts have been objects of an analysis where the singling out of similar discursive patterns has been the main target. Central to the discourse analysis is that no materials are considered more authentic than any other. The central task of the researcher is instead to try to explain and argue which context is represented and why, and to discuss the implications of this selection on the study at large. This is not to say that the analysis of data need not be systematically conducted, but rather that a variety of data can be treated equally or as no text, document or interview has a preference above the other. The official knowledge expressed in policy can be analyzed as no more truthful than tabloid media narratives or an individual's life narratives, but it can have different truth claims as its knowledge is produced in different context. Not to say that such different sources of talk are treated equally in society and are considered equally legitimate (Cf. "legitimate speak"). The reality expressed in policy, for instance, can have hegemonic authority over other opposing discourses within a given nation (see Sahlin, 1999: 87). This gives specific ethical implications for the analysis of the three different data that I will return to in section 3.5.2.

In my study, I have tried to select documents representing three different levels of contexts: national, media and local levels. Although I strived to get a comprehensive overview of the media and national contexts with regard to unaccompanied minors in Norway and Sweden, to get a total overview is unmanageable. Still, the broad review of texts that I conducted can offer some important emphasis to official (policy) or common sense (media) responses and articulations of a specific social issue such as unaccompanied minors.

3.4 Discourse analysis in practice — “How to do it” and “How I did it”

In this section I intend to give some clarifying examples of how I went about conducting my discourse analysis of the three different texts: newspaper narratives, policy and interview data.

According to Bergström and Boréus (2000), conducting an analysis of analytical constructs involves highlighting specific and central concepts in order to analyze their assigned meaning, what is or is not said with regard to this topic, and the implications of the explicitly and inherently expressed knowledge. This also involves analyzing how a concept or different concepts are formed or are being conceptualized within talk or a specific discourse. This is also about analyzing how problematizations are presented and of studying the narratives and conceptualization that combined produces specific problematizations.

Intra-discursive dependencies relate to how phenomena within a discourse are combined and interrelated (Ibid: 262f). The dissecting of such concepts in the process of discourse analysis often relates to how change within specific talk evolves inside the specific discourse: historically and contextually (Cf. Foucault, 1977 and Chapter 2, section 2.1).

In the following section, I provide some examples of how I analyzed intra-discursive dependencies, ambivalences, connotations, and conceptualizations with regard to policy, newspaper narratives and interview transcripts.

The three extracts below exemplify how differently the concept of unaccompanied minors can become fixated in the official versus media context. Sometimes the fixation or contextualization is done with regard to the children and youngsters positioned as unaccompanied or separated, and at other times the conceptualization of them are linked to other migration-related phenomena such as irregular migration.

Annually, a large number of children and young people without accompanying parents or legal guardian arrive Sweden to seek asylum, as so-called unaccompanied children. Although their life stories and backgrounds vary, what is common to them is that they are all in an exposed situation. It is therefore an important and joint responsibility of the relevant authorities to prioritize the reception of these children and the investigation of their asylum cases. (Migrationsverket, Socialstyrelsen och SKL 2009, *Ett gemensamt ansvar för ensamkommande barn och ungdomar.*)

In the quote above unaccompanied minors are understood first and foremost as minor asylum seekers who arrive Sweden without accompanying parents. They are also understood as children in an exposed situation for whom proper action needs to be taken. Inherently, in the quote there consists a connection between the status of being without a legal guardian and minor, and the perceived exposure of the unaccompanied child. No differences working between the different unaccompanied children are emphasized even though it is stated that they are here for different reasons. Instead, the specific and essential vulnerability of their situation is stressed and the importance of relevant authorities taking joint action is constructed as urgent.

Meanwhile it is obvious that organized criminals are behind the transportation of asylum-seeking children to Norway. According to an internal memo from Nya Kripas (Norwegian police) there is a lot of evidence (supporting that) criminals are behind the transportation of asylum-seeking children to Norway, and their subsequent disappearances. The Chinese children that arrives Scandinavia, are virtually identically dressed. (Dagbladet 2005, *UDI anmelder ikke forsvinningene*. 05-11-30.)

Since November 1, 2004 approximately a hundred Chinese youngsters have arrived at Arlanda (Airport) and claimed political asylum there and then disappeared. ... The youngsters have arrived without travel documents or carried false travel documents and they claim to be less than 18 year of age, which the majority of them probably are. They reveal very little, if any, information about themselves and their origin. At arrival they carried similar equipment and clothing, and the same amount of money. (Expressen 2005, *Stockholmspar anhålllet för att ha smuglat barn*. 05.11.26.)

Other aspects with relevance to a discourse on unaccompanied minors are highlighted in the two newspaper extracts above. In this quotation unaccompanied minors are articulated as unaccompanied Chinese minors or youngsters, hence emphasizing a specific intersection of ethnicity and age that are carrying false travel documents and later to disappear. In the extract from the Norwegian Dagbladet minors are constructed as transported to Norway by an organized crime network. The unaccompanied minor is in these citations pointed out as the carrier of false documentation, and the focus in the narration is the specific sequence of action or *modus operandi* of the minors. Instead of pointing out unaccompanied minors as exposed children, they are instead ambiguously related to other concept such as trafficking, smuggling or forms of irregular migration. They are simultaneously highlighted as victims, objects that are transported or smuggled, but also as active subjects acting in similar fashion.

In order to deconstruct specific discourses the researcher can choose different angles of reference (Bergström and Boréus, 2000: 288). In this work, I also tried to extract systems of meaning through examining the implications of a concept — its connotations. The two newspaper quotes above illustrate how the seemingly neutral concept such as unaccompanied minor asylum seeker is always understood in relation to other concepts such as, for instance, victim on the one hand but yet smuggling, irregular migration or so-called bogus asylum seekers or even organized crime on the other hand (Cf. Malkki 1995, Watters 2008 and Hansen 2008 for similar lines of reasoning; Thörn 2004). In the quote from the Swedish Migration Board, National Board of Health and Welfare, and SKL (2010), connotations between unaccompanied children are tied to the concept of family and to the state as being separated and in an exposed situation. (This construction could also be analyzed as connected to attachment theory.)

Since the varying concepts of asylum, refugee, victim, trafficking, smuggling, irregular migration, and bogus asylum seeker versus family, separation and vulnerability give rather opposite meanings, one can argue that they work to construct the unaccompanied minor subject as rather ambivalent. Such ambivalent imaging is often called “double exposure” (Cf. Thörn 2004 and the discussion in Chapter 2, section 2.2.2 ‘Governing ambivalence’).³⁵ What is also important part of the deconstruction of discourses is to analyze how such rather diverse concepts interrelates. This has to do with how “chains of equivalence” or how systems of discourses are also systems of distinctions with inherent positive and negative understandings (Bergström and Boréus, 2000: 229f). Revealing such binary oppositions or dichotomies has been an important part of my discourse analysis.

The examples above also highlight some of the ambivalences that coexist within the discourse of unaccompanied minors, yet at the same time being a vulnerable and also undecidable subject. By analyzing ambivalence the researcher can visualize how contradictions, tensions and conflicts operate (and even coexist) in different contexts and within a specific discourse.

Another important part of the analysis conducted here has also involved accentuating and analyzing some of the important narratives that give meaning to the discourse of the unaccompanied minor in different contexts, but also with regard to how people in interviews, when they talk about themselves, tend to make sense of themselves in a narrative form. The narrative form implies a packaging of changes, causality, time and space, and different kinds of action in a way that makes different social phenomena and incidenc-

³⁵ “Double exposure” points to the instance when two opposing images of a subject simultaneously coexist and creates ambivalence (Thörn 2004).

es seem coherent (Cf. Johansson 2005). The analysis of narratives involves analyzing what can be framed as both “public narratives” (Ibid: 96f) such as media narrations, but also how different organizations, for instance, talk about/present themselves and make sense of others in order to maintain order and meaningfulness. In the quote from the Swedish Migration Board, National Board of Health and Welfare and SKL (2009), the emphasis on the vulnerability and exposure of the unaccompanied minors become an important part of a public narrative that legitimizes the specific division of labor between the three authorities. Within interview data it is how people narrate personal stories (“ontological narratives”, Johansson 2005: 96) and talk about their experiences (Ibid: 29f, 47f, see Chapter 2) that are of interest: who they are and how they position themselves, yet also how they position themselves with regard to public narratives.

Furthermore, evident in the three quotes is how the combined framings (or angle of incidences and narratives put to the fore in the extracts) also help to problematize the issue at hand in a specific way.

To conduct a discourse analysis includes estranging and distancing oneself from the texts, documents or interview transcripts (i.e. data), a process completed by underlining specific key words or concepts with the help of quotation marks (Sahlin, 1999: 91.) This process helps to underline the specifics of occurrences/ways of making sense of things that would otherwise seem just common sense to us, in a way that highlights them and make them present themselves to us in novel ways (Ibid). To conduct a discourse analysis means trying to critically deconstruct the often rather vague distinctions between what is considered legitimate or illegitimate, between the normal or abnormal (Börjesson and Palmblad 2007:8), and includes an thorough analysis of different social categories in order to study how they are transformed and performed in talk and text.

The data collection process, the reading of previous research and theory, and analysis has constituted parallel or circular flows during the course of work. I have also coded, organized and systematized some of my empirical data (policy and newspaper narratives) with the help of a program for qualitative analysis (Atlas.ti). In my first coding of the newspaper narratives and official documents I focused on how concepts such as “children versus adults”, “gender” and “age”, and how “vulnerability” was constructed and framed with reference to “unaccompanied minors”. Themes and important concepts in previous research on asylum, migration and unaccompanied children (see e.g., Engebrigsen 2002, 2012; Eide 2005; Eide and Broch 2010; Eide et al. 2012; Hansen 2008; Watters 2007, 2008, 2012) offered me other constructive tools in further categorizations of the different textual elements.

The samples of reports, plans of action, newspaper articles and so on comprised of more varied lookouts and topics on unaccompanied children than expressed in newspaper narratives. Confronted with the diversity of the empirical material, I soon became aware that in order to systematically analyze it, I needed to find specific angles around which I could structure the material. This would also allow me to get a better overview. I consequently had to work more inductively (especially with regard to policy data) in order to find key themes to target the material. This process involved reading the texts over and over, but it also meant getting to know the specific inner organizations of the material, and detect the issues that were perceived and articulated as central and common amongst them. My theoretical point of departure became an important point of reference and offered me practical work tools in this process.

Moreover, with reference to the sample of interview data I soon found connections to many of the same themes that I had detected in the media narratives and in policy, as the interviewees pointed to many of the same repertoires of meaning that came about in newspaper articles and policy. This was of course also expected as the number of narratives available is limited or constricted within discourse (Cf. Sahlin 1999). The subjects articulated many of the same points of reference evident in policy and media narratives in their talk, but it was rather how they chose to relate themselves to these official images that varied. In talk and in narrations there is also always a potential to question and oppose the official and dominant views.

TEYMOR: I think the biggest difference when they arrive is their lack of psychological (well-being); unaccompanied children do not feel well. When compared to (asylum-seeking children) who arrive with their parents, it's a big difference. You do immediately see that they cannot concentrate and that they are always thinking, "When will I get my residence permit?" And when they get their residence permits they think, "How to do with my parents; will they be able to come or not?" So there are so many different thoughts going on in their mind and then that becomes the reason why they cannot concentrate more on their studies, compared to a regular student who has (their) parents here and has that, how to say it, that security.

(Group interview with secondary school teachers in rural municipality 111107 page 2f)

In Teymor's quote above we see a narration with a clear reference to some of the understandings expressed in the quote from the Swedish Migration Board, National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), and SKL (2009). In this quote the unaccompanied minor is considered vulnerable and exposed because they are: 1) here alone (separated) without security; 2) given

the specific status of being in the asylum process; and 3) more exposed in comparison to accompanied migrant and refugee children.

*

The undertaking of any empirical study does always bring forth discussions concerning the cogency and consistency of the research process. With regard to the discourse analysis, the liability of specific research can be examined in relation to whether or not it has been conducted systematically or whether the presentation is open for “inter-subjectivity testing” or not (see Bergström and Boréus, 2000: 37, 77, 142, Sahlin 1999: 90f, and Whinter Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000: 154). In order to make my interpretation of themes in the policy data, newspaper narratives or the interviews accessible to the reader, I have used quotations to support and illustrate my arguments. By doing this I have hopefully enhanced the transparency of my study (Bergström and Boréus 2000: 262). With regard to the accuracy or plausibility of my work, anyone who wants to critically examine the material — whether be it policy, newspaper articles and interview data — can do so and hence test the fairness of the conclusions drawn. I have also tried not to edit the content of the interview quotations more than sometimes merely modifying them a little only to make them more understandable to the reader. When I have left something out of the interview quote I have marked this with the ellipses marks ... and the pauses made by the interviewee are made apparent with the symbol (...). I have sometimes written in some central key words in brackets to help the reader understand or contextualize what it is that the interviewee is talking about.

3.5 Ethical considerations

As the interview study conducted by Charlotte Melander and myself, included here, involved the gathering and handling of rather sensitive data, it underwent an ethical vetting by the Ethical Review Board in Gothenburg during spring 2011. Yet, the researcher cannot handle ethical considerations at one particular point in time and then be all done with them. This highlights how ethical evaluations or research ethics in social science involve conduct that needs constant pondering and problematizing, and comes to refer to dilemmas researchers are confronted with at different stages of a study or analysis. With regard to this thesis, ethical considerations need to be discussed surrounding the interview study with the unaccompanied minors and

the people involved in the reception of them (before, during and after the interviews were conducted), but also with regard to conducting a specific method such as the discourse analysis.

In the following section, I will firstly describe some of the dilemmas that the interview study came to generate. Secondly, I will address ethics with regard to the different materials and to conducting a discourse analysis.

3.5.1 Talking to unaccompanied minors and officials and support staff

As there is a general lack of good qualitative studies on unaccompanied minors in a Swedish context one could argue that this justify that well thought through studies are conducted where unaccompanied minors' specific conditions and life stories are highlighted. Unaccompanied children and adolescents can be described as "vulnerable research subjects". As children, minors are often dependent on adults and have a constrained freedom of action and autonomy (Cf. Engebriksen 2002; 2012). Kylmä (1999) notes that while it is important from an ethical viewpoint to protect vulnerable participants from harm, the researcher does not need to be overprotective. The possible tension that overprotecting generates requires a high level of awareness of the different ethical aspects that the research process awakens. Though this study does not represent the daily strategies of unaccompanied minors, it aims to analyze a highly politicized concept, in other words a highly politicized subject. As many of the issues concerning unaccompanied minors are seemingly politically hot topics, this demands a high degree of reflectiveness of the researcher on the possible impact the study at hand can have on a vulnerable group (Cf. VR 2013).

The process of selection (see section 3.2.3.1) resulted in 9 interviews with a total of 10 youngsters above 15 years of age, which were all given written additional information about the study (during the interview and in text form in their native languages), and were asked to sign an informed consent note. The youngsters were also told that they could withdraw if they did not feel like going through with the interview, as their participation was voluntary. We were also explicit about the fact that what they said during the interview should have no negative consequences for them. Their participation would also be anonymous, and specific incidences with regard to their individual situations would be omitted from the written text. The fact that we had to obtain a written consent form was a bit ambivalent in my opinion and could be understood as us asking them for a more binding consent. Asking for written consent was done in accordance with the guidelines given by the

Ethical Review Board (EPN 2012: 4). Nine of the youngsters still agreed on participating and let us record the interview dialogue, whereas one of the interviewed boys objected being recorded. In order to analyze this particular interview I then had to rely on the field notes taken during the time of the conversation.

As unaccompanied minors the youngsters and young adults that we interviewed were all surrounded by many different actors involved in their daily care. There could hence be a risk that even though Charlotte and I did our very best to describe the constraint and limits of the researcher's role, the interviewees still had a blurred understanding of what participating in a research study might mean. Our role versus the position of, for instance, their social workers, their custodians amid for instance the different Swedish Migration Board officers who investigate their claim for asylum or application for family reunification could also be difficult to distinguish from one another. Although we tried to be as explicit as possible about the fact that their participation in the study would not impact issues related to their family unification, asylum process or daily life, we could never be totally sure that the interviewee fully understood this. And although many of them stressed that their decision to participate was done in the best interest of others or newly arrived unaccompanied children and minors in mind, we could never be completely certain that the youngsters really felt free to choose participating or not as they had been asked to do so by their custodians, their teachers or HVB staff. This of course points to the hierarchical positions that the interviewer might hold amid their interviewee, but also to youngsters' possible circumscribed space of autonomy amid adults. According to Kohli (2006, 2007), Eide et al. (2012) and Malmsten (2012), unaccompanied minors often give short and "thin" descriptions of their ordeals and experiences (what Kohli labels "the sound of silence") to officials but also during research interviews. Sometimes this can be understood as a strategy in order to avoid overtly sensitive information getting in the wrong hands.³⁶ With regard conducting a research interview this is non-problematic from the youngsters' point of view but constitutes more of an information problem for the researcher. The sound of silence could also be illustrative of a possible resistance strategy that youngsters in general might choose to practice when confronted with scrutinizing adult eyes, that is not to reveal too much information (Cf. Kohli 2006; Wernesjö 2014). According to Lofstrand (2005: 68-71), the interview situation might also mirror former negative experiences

³⁶ This is not to imply that unaccompanied minors tell lies during their contact with many different officials, only to underline that it can be hard to know to whom it is wise to give information, what kind of information that is expected of you when you are surrounded by multiple actors with various tasks.

such as having been interrogated and questioned by officials (e.g., police, social service or migration board officers), occurrences to which all of the youngsters interviewed here held their individual recollections and experiences.

The sound of silence versus making youngsters talk also points to how the interview style preferred by the interviewer comes to affect what information the interviewee feels willing to share. According to Thörn (2004), you might never totally illuminate the possible hierarchical division that might exist between the interviewer and the interviewee, but that acting self-reflexive during the interview might diminish some of these effects. For instance, conducting interviews with unaccompanied minors involves a balancing act between making people open up to you, which of course is in the best interest of the researcher, but also not to act in such a manner that the interviewee risks revealing what they later feels was too much information. By trying to pass as “friendly strangers”, in other words trying to limit the sense of the interview situation as a kind of interrogation, but yet not coming too close or manipulating the interviewee into being too informative, Charlotte and I tried to find a balance between the two opposite interview styles (Cf. Thörn 2004: 44-47 for a thorough discussion on objectification and hierarchies in interviews involving people in exposed situations.) Still, interviewing unaccompanied minors has also in some cases involved listening to narratives encompassing acute situations to which we as researchers feel obliged to act or respond on by referring the youngsters to the proper contact that could offer them further assistance.

When reading the written transcripts of the nine interviews analyzed here it sometimes appears as if the youngsters manage their possible insecurity by treating us as every other official: they often answer politely and short. (Still, the interviews give interesting insight into how the youngsters also position themselves with regard to the conceptions of unaccompanied minors that they put to the fore.) This is not to say that the interviewee could not implicitly object to the power relation by, for example, looking bored during the interviews or laughing, which also points to the fact that it was actually they who were doing us a favor by spending some of their valuable time answering our questions.

LIVE: But if you meet a Swedish girl, then?

NADIF: I think not.

LIVE: You think not?

TABAN: (Laughs)

LIVE: So now you are laughing? (Laughs)

TABAN: Yes.
NADIF: Swedish girls, you cannot trust them, you know.
TABAN: Right.
LIVE: Why do you think that's so?
NADIF: She won't become a housewife.
LIVE: No, that is understandable.
NADIF: I want a housewife.
TABAN: No (that's) crap, that doesn't matter as long as she is a hot Somali.
(Group interview with two Somali boys 111118 page 17)

The dialogue above is an extract of the interview conducted with the two boys, Nadif and Taban. In it they position Swedish girls as untrustworthy and as a binary opposition to what Nadif articulates as housewife material or to Taban's construct of the attractive or "hot Somali girl". Implicitly this could also be analyzed as a way of somehow degrading me a little bit, as I in Nadif and Taban's understanding also could be one of those Swedish women they are talking about (i.e., I am evidently there to do my job and not at home "housewifing", and I am clearly not of Somali origin). In this part of the interview my positioning as the superior researcher becomes twisted and my presence is first and foremost an example of a "Swedish girl".

With regard to the total number of interviews conducted, Charlotte and I entered shifting and different positions amidst our interviewees during our interviews as the interviewee possibly came to view us (and we them) differently due to their various held positions and tasks, and of course due to intersections of, for example, age and gender operating between us.

The officials and support staff we interviewed were also given additional written information about the study, and although all of them agreed to let us record the interviews some stressed the importance of being ensured anonymity in the writing process to avoid any kind of retaliation due to the information given. This also points to how they sometimes find it difficult to critically dissect their own workplace, as they might fear reprisals from their superiors. Furthermore, they could be analyzed as viewing Charlotte and I as critical evaluators or as conducting a critical evaluation of their workplaces, hence maybe even resulting in system changes.

This highlights the possible shifting hierarchies that could coexist between us as interviewers and the officials and support staff: our presence could be constructed as scrutinizing or questioning their work, but we were also grateful for having gained access and allowing us to take up some of their precious time. In order to conduct the interviews with officials and support staff, Charlotte and I could sometimes take on the role of the "distant

colleague” by stressing our own competence or familiarity with regard to, for instance, the field of teaching or draw upon our own experiences of parenthood amid the foster parents or HVB staff. We could also pass as “curious listeners”, eager to hear about the specific work and thoughts on that conduct that the interviewer revealed. (These positions echo the friendly stranger role amidst the youngsters). Still, I also found it important not to behave or act totally sycophantic, but to answer honestly whenever possible if the interviewee asked me a direct question concerning my beliefs or values in relation to the subject or topic at hand, or to somehow question the narrations that officials, support staff or the youngsters expressed (see e.g., how I somewhat identify with girls objecting to becomes housewives in the dialogue with Taban and Nadif).

BIRGITTA: Another specific thing that I hear a lot about is money, money, more money, I want more money. ...

LIVE: I'm thinking a bit like (...)... isn't it also true that age? ... Doesn't youngsters in general cost quite a lot? Is it specific to this group then to want money?

BIRGITTA: When I talk about money, I think that they want money to send home. Yes of course even for themselves, but this asking for more money thing is ... but that's true a 17-year-old boy, my God, they are expensive!

(Group interview with HVB staff 110615 page11-12)

In the above extract I tried to problematize Birgitta's image of unaccompanied minors as especially “pocket money demanding” (what she articulates as a “specific thing” in relation to this group) by asking her if being in need of money could also be comprehended as part of being a youngster in general. This quotation points to the active interpretative part of an interview conversation taken by the interviewer, but also to how I made some of my personally held values and beliefs explicit during the interviews, especially when I would have felt that I otherwise could be misleading the interviewee into saying something in the belief that I agreed with it (Cf. Oakley 1999). In the extract Birgitta rephrases and clarifies her point of view as a response to my question.

In writing this thesis the names of the participating youngsters, the different officials and support staff have all been replaced by fictitious names. Incidences special or characteristic to individuals have been carved out in order to anonymize the narratives given. In the balancing act between writing a catchy text and protecting the identity of the participants, the anonymization of individual stories has had precedence.

The majority of the officials and support people staff or officials interviewed said that they choose to participate due to what they articulated as the need to highlight certain aspects of the reception of unaccompanied minors and because they narrated themselves as compassionate about working with and for unaccompanied minors. Their own self-positioning is important to keep in mind, as many of the participants might have wanted me to present and/ or validate what they constructed as “good experiences” during the interviews and in regards to the analysis (in the FoU in Väst (/GR) report 2: 2013/Stretmo and Melander 2013, but also within regards to this thesis). This ambivalence illustrates the interpretative privilege that I as a researcher have amidst with my interviewees, and is one of the topics that will be addressed in the last section of this chapter, but firstly though I will turn to ethical aspects of the discourse analysis.

3.5.2 Is the discourse analysis an unethical and immoral method? The question of Self-reflexivity

In the previous section, I discussed some ethical implications of interviewing youngsters in an exposed situation and those working with them during and after the interviews. In this section, however, my objective is to discuss research ethics with regard to conducting a discourse analysis. Another imperative matter in the process of discourse analysis is the importance of critical self-reflection: if language and speech, text and talk are imbedded within a discourse, whatever the researcher says, writes and thinks also becomes part of a specific discourse.

A question or accusation that I have been confronted with throughout this study is whether or not the discourse analysis has specific limits, and whether or not conducting one could also be somewhat problematic from an ethical point of view. In order to defend myself, I will start by sharing an extract of a memory work I conducted during my first couple of years as a PhD student. This particular memory points to a specific experience of being questioned due to the fact that I aimed to conduct a discourse analysis.

I am sitting in Stockholm, having just finished a speech on the media debate concerning a discourse on trafficking and missing asylum-seeking minors. The seminar is popular and people seem to listen with interest, but I wonder why I feel awkward by the rather lukewarm reception my presentation receives. No one comments and I sit down feeling even a bit bewildered and shameful, clutching my paper between sweaty palms. The next speaker, who avoids my eyes, gives an engaging exposition on the importance of victim empowerment. She finally concludes her mesmerizing talk by stating, “I clearly position myself against re-

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searchers and feminists who commit the constant crime of relativizing the experiences of victims, and hence re-victimizes exposed people. This is indeed immoral research!” Silence. Then I understand why she proceeds to avoid my eyes: she is addressing *me*, I am the unethical researcher she’s been talking about and everyone else in the room knows it. (Memory work 2008-10)

This extract illustrates some of the emotions that conducting a discourse analysis sometimes seem to awaken in others, yet also in the researcher (me) who risks being questioned or positioned as an “immoral researcher”. In this specific incidence the immoral practice was to conduct a deconstruction that, according to the other researcher, could endanger the emancipation of an exposed group of victims. In her conceptualization the target of a study aiming at deconstruction should not be an exposed group such as unaccompanied or trafficked youngsters. Such a study could imply questioning the vulnerability of trafficked unaccompanied minors, relativizing their suffering and even providing arguments for a conservative phalanx eager to toughen up on restrictive asylum and immigration policies. In her opinion, an analysis of “words” or “language use” could also imply that I did not perceive the harsh reality of marginalization. In my defense I argue that stating that the social world is discursively constructed is not to deny its realism (Cf. Chapter 2, section 2.1), but rather that we cannot understand or grip social phenomena outside of our conceptualizations. At the risk of repeating myself this angle of incidence implies that what a given society comes to understand as concrete or natural, such as the body, a tree or a stone but also as pain or suffering, is only understandable given our language and the words we use to describe them or given that these sensations are conceived as legitimate or even “speakable” (Cf. Christie 2001 for a discussion concerning who or what criteria constitutes a “real or respectable victim”, or Butler 2009, 2011 for an interesting analysis of whose life “White Middle-class Westerners” consider as worth mourning or not). With regard to the paper I presented in Stockholm some of my main points were that the experiences and possible sexual vulnerability of young boys were excluded or silenced from the victim category, as the main focus was on trafficked young women. Deconstructing the implications of the trafficking focus vis-à-vis asylum rights was another important point made in this regard (Stretmo unpublished).

Since discourses are formulated through normative processes they need to be examined and questioned. This is also why ethical agreements need to be articulated and renegotiated again and again in different segments of society and contexts (Lentz Taguchi 2009: 60f). The objective of the discourse analysis in such a perception is not to re-victimize exposed subjects but to ques-

tion the practices that label the experiences of some subjects as painful and/or legitimate/deserved versus illegitimate/undeserved cf. Watters 2007; Butler 2009; 2011). Also central to this undertaking is questioning whether being positioned as a victim always works in favor of the positioned subject — a process of subjectification — or whether it could also be highly problematic (Cf. Lenz Taguchi 2009).

I'm talking to a former shelter client who hated her shelter stay. She complains that workers treated her like a child, telling her what to do, telling her how she should understand herself and her experiences. She tells me, "I'm not that type of woman, I'm not a battered woman, I didn't want them to make me into one so I left." A social worker would say this woman is in "denial", but I wonder: she had been assaulted but she resisted being that type of woman. A battered woman must be a "type" of woman, but what type? Where does the image of a "type" of woman come from? Can workers make women into a battered woman? Can workers convince women that this is how they should think of themselves? Would that be a good thing to do?

(Donileen Loseke 2014-02-07 <http://sociology.usf.edu/vfaculty/dloseke/>)

The quote from Loseke above accentuates how positioning someone (e.g., a woman) into "something" (e.g., a battered woman) is not straightforward. The very process of subjectification might also awaken or imply a state of ambivalence or resistance in the subject suddenly labeled or named as "something". According to Haraway (1991), the post-structural researcher identity implies a highly political positioning because its main aim is to sensitize or problemize what labeling something implies (Cf. Lenz Taguchi 2009: 180f), but also to understand that no completely innocent category(ies) exists that can describe or name something more truthfully. This of course also colors the researcher, as research on social issues constitutes part of the perception, production of meaning or constitution of the very subject of knowledge that the research focuses on (Sahlin 1999: 104f and Whinter Jørgensen and Phillips 2000:152-154). Such a starting point emphasizes how science has no principal or automatic dominion over other opposing understandings. Scientific knowledge, as opposed to journalistic conducts or common sense, has been produced differently and preferably through the conduct of systematically conducted studies. Moreover, it is evaluated through different channels that can hence bring forth important supplements to such comprehensions (Ibid: 154).

3.6 Who's perspective? The importance of transparency

Conducting a discourse analysis accentuates the fact that the researcher actively takes part in the production of meaning. This underlines the important questions of self-reflexivity discussed in the previous part of this chapter: the researcher needs to reflect on the possible consequences of their endeavor, but they are also forced to analyze how their privately held preconceptions might affect the analysis. This highlights the need for the researcher to be transparent with regard to personal values and understandings.

With reference to my Stockholm memory in the previous section, it is also interesting to reflect on the fact that conducting a discourse analysis could have been more legitimate (at least by the other researcher) if I had aimed to scrutinize the conduct of officials instead of what she positioned as victims. This thesis comprises different cases and as part of my study includes policy and the narratives given by officials and support staff amid the narratives of youngsters who arrive in Sweden as unaccompanied minors, this additional focus is evident: Taking on the opposite point of view though risks awakening other groups' discontent and accusations of being biased.

I will give another example to illustrate my point. In the aftermath of a conference where I had just finished talking about what Stretmo and Melander (2013) analyzed as a strange mismatch between the rate of reported traumatizing experiences amongst newly arrived unaccompanied minors (based on a selection of 154 individual asylum cases) versus the rejection and residence rate.³⁷ A man, presenting himself as some kind of statistical expert from the Swedish Migration Board, walked up to me to thank me for my presentation and to discuss the presented data. Initially, he seemed enthusiastic, when suddenly shifting from being polite and smiling into looking annoyed and asking me if my aim had been to question the work conducted by the Swedish Migration Board? He finished what came to feel like a small interrogation by stating: "Asylum seekers can tell lies you know!" (memory work 2012-11).

This example corresponds to what Becker (1967) describes as knowledge always being angled (i.e., there is no such thing as being totally objective), but that analytically treating the narratives of underdogs as equal to their superiors is associated with being more angled than if the case were the other way around. According to Becker (Ibid), there is a hierarchy of credibility,

³⁷ According to my analysis, it was fundamentally the child or youngsters' country of origin and not the different reported experiences that were primarily weighted when the child was granted permanent stay or not.

which comes to make the claims made by superiors seem less biased and more “neutral” in comparison to the underdogs (Cf. Löfstrand 2005: 73f): The higher the subject is positioned in a hierarchy the more neutral people tend to conceive the claims made. According to the aforementioned Swedish Migration Board individual who confronted me, the perspective of the underdog or the asylum-seeking subject was considered as less legitimate (Cf. Foucault 1965; 1977) than the validations made by the Swedish Migration Board. Taking on the point of view of the youngsters who claim asylum in Sweden as unaccompanied minors is hence constructed as less neutral than listening to the narratives made by professionals.

With regard to conducting the study presented here, I strived to balance my reading and analysis in such a way that I tried my very best to treat the different materials equally (see also section 3.4). This is not to ignore or silence the fact that my personal loyalties always lie with the children and youngsters claiming asylum on their own, hence becoming the target of different, and in my opinion, restrictive policies. My study is meant to problematize dominant views within the discourse of unaccompanied minors by highlighting how specific conceptualizations obscure our focus and direct it in specific ways (Cf. Thörn 2004: 59), but also to avoid drawing deterministic conclusions (Cf. Lenz Taguchi 2009: 60f, 169, 181).

This also highlights the fact that my conclusions are being brought to the fore here. I cannot give voice to the experiences of youngsters who arrive in Sweden as unaccompanied minors without risking essentializing them. It is also my interpretations that have been given precedence above other possible analysis or perspectives. With regard to the interviewed youngsters, officials and support staff, media and official policy, this involves questioning or deconstructing some of the conducts that are taken for granted or even articulated as justified, moral and good.

In order to argue, debate, enhance the accountability of this study, and support and validate the main conclusions drawn here, I continually discuss or relate them to other research findings and theorizations (Cf. Lalander, 2001: 266 or Davies 1999). Such constant pondering also constructs the process of conducting a discourse analysis as a continuous negotiation process and reflexive dialectic between the empirical materials, the researcher’s preconceptions, theoretical premises, and previously conducted research findings. With all this said it is now time to move on to the analysis of the media, policy and interviews.

4

The missing child – media narratives and national problematizations

In Chapter 4, I present my first case, analyzing how unaccompanied minors were problematized in Norwegian and Swedish newspapers from 2000-2008 (in a comparison between the two countries) and then turn my gaze to Swedish and Norwegian policy papers in order to highlight if and how similar problematizations were articulated in official policy. Central to this analysis is deconstructing what kind of social problems that unaccompanied minors were conceptualized as connected to and what actions were measured as important in the newspaper narratives and official policy.

During my analysis of newspapers (originating from 2000 until mid-2008) it became apparent that their articles often included narratives of unaccompanied minors that vanished without a trace. Highlighting missing asylum-seeking children was done so many times that when Norwegian and Swedish newspapers featured stories on unaccompanied minors they nearly without exception made reference to vanishing unaccompanied children and youngsters. In my opinion this makes the issue of missing asylum-seeking children interesting to deconstruct from the point of view of the researcher describing how these stories are accentuated or framed. What do these stories tell us about Norwegian and Swedish common sense ideas of unaccompanied minors? What social problems are constructed as part of the articulation of those missing and what actions are deemed necessary?

In section 4.1, I deconstruct the media debate concerning unaccompanied minors who vanished without a trace from refugee centers in Norway and Sweden using my media sample of 158 articles (Cf. Chapter 3, section 3.2.1). Answering how these incidences were made and re-categorized is done in connection to two rather distinct periods (2000-2005 and 2005 until mid-

2008) or two specific events/happenings (or critical discursive moments) in Norwegian and Swedish newspaper articles. In section 4.2, however, I analyze the official responses to the claims raised in the newspaper narratives. I also highlight possible counterclaims — what (if at all) were the Norwegian and Swedish official understandings of missing children and problem solutions? — that were emphasized by Swedish and Norwegian authorities in order to answer possible accusations made by and in the media. In section 4.3, I sum up my main findings and conclusions presented in this chapter.

4.1 2000-2008 — missing or damaged children and ambivalent victims in Norwegian and Swedish newspaper narratives

The period between 2000-2005 versus 2005 until mid-2008 are two distinct times with regard to how narratives of missing unaccompanied minors were featured in Norwegian and Swedish newspapers. In the first period, Norwegian and Swedish problematizations differed, which is why I intend to firstly present the Norwegian case in section 4.1.1 before I move to its Swedish counterpart in 4.1.2. In the second period, on the contrary, the Swedish and Norwegian newspaper narratives resembled one another, which I discuss and analyze in section 4.1.3 of the media analysis before I move to Norwegian and Swedish policy responses in section 4.2.

4.1.1 Norway – 2000-2005 the missing asylum-seeking child as a case of a missing child

From the year 2000, instances of asylum-seeking children disappearing from refugee centers were featured with some repetition in Norwegian newspapers (Cf. Verdens Gang 2000, 2001; Aftenposten 2002, 2003; Dagbladet 2004). These articles highlighted episodes of unaccompanied minors that had gone missing from refugee centers in Norway. Articles highlighted the fact that neither the police nor the UDI (Norwegian board of immigration), or anyone, seemed to do anything substantial to investigate such disappearances.

Last year ... a total of 65 unaccompanied minors went missing from the reception centers. Society must make as much of an effort to find these children, like (it does in order to trace) any other child who disappears.

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(Aftenposten 2003, *Rekordmange barn søker asyl*. 03.01-27)

Sometimes this was considered a consequence of it simply being too *easy* for an adult to pick up a child from the centers, by pretending to be next of kin (Verdens Gang 2000, 2001; Dagbladet 2000), at other times the disappearance is described in terms of an unresolved mystery (“Nobody knows where they went or what has happened to them”):

88 unaccompanied asylum seekers have disappeared from Norwegian asylum centers so far this year. No one knows where they are, and no one is searching for them. Save the Children fears that asylum children risks involvement in criminal activities or prostitution, and requires that the UDI and the police investigate their whereabouts
(sic. Verdens Gang 2000, *88 asylbarn savnet*. 00.12.16)

In the extract above the asylum seeker is constructed as a case of a vulnerable “missing child”. According to Best (1990), missing children have been problematized as one of the 20th century’s most important social problems leading to vital policy creations in order to safeguard children.³⁸ Important in this claims-making process has been to point to the vulnerability of children as a group instead of stressing the possible differences between them. The term “missing children” has become known and understood as (possible) victims of a specific and recognizable social problem.

In the extract from the VG (2000) the process of “people production” (Cf. Loseke 1993: 207) or assigning victim status to some subjects (yet not to others) is, in the Norwegian newspaper narration, played out by the claim-maker Save the Children Norway. Save the Children is quoted while demanding immediate action with regard to missing asylum-seeking children, Save the Children is framed as the only subject who cares and believes there is reason to fear that these missing children are at risk of either prostitution or criminal activities. It is highlighted that nobody seems to care since the missing child at hand is an “asylum-seeking child” and not a missing “Norwegian child”, or that the child at hand is a “brown child” instead of a “(Norwegian looking) white child” (see e.g., Dagbladet 2000, Andres unger. 00.10.01), hence indicating that the Norwegian treatment of unaccompanied minors

³⁸ By “missing children” I here refer to the instance of *runaways, custodial snatchings* and *stranger kidnappings* that Best (1990) sees as part of the American “missing children” concept and that were constructed as a coherent social problem during the 1960ties until the 1980ties. Even though Bests (Ibid) study focus on the American context, it probably do reflect similar attention and action directed preventive measures in order to safeguard children in European public awareness (during the same time period). Cases of “missing underage asylum seekers” did not constitute part of the “missing children” problem when it was initially formulated as a social problem.

could have a discriminating bias with regard to unaccompanied asylum seekers. It is assumed that the probable number of missing asylum-seeking children cases is increasing, as so far a total number of 88 children have traceless disappeared, indicating an outrage at the lack of interest in the whereabouts of these missing asylum-seeking children. “Children” as such are to be seen as children foremost and migrants second,³⁹ and are hence entitled to the same treatment and care that every other Norwegian child receives. Underlined in this construction is a perspective of a Norwegian society that by neglecting “asylum children” (sic.) risks endangering its own self-perception as one of the world’s most child-friendly countries (Dagbladet 2000, Dagbladet 2001). It is also a somewhat “entitlement-based claim”, where children’s rights as children are being stressed (Cf. Meyer 2007: 88 and Lidén and Vitus 2009).

According to Gullestad (1997), there is a strong connection between the Norwegian national identity and the caring for children and children’s rights. “Children” in the national narration are perceived as intrinsically different from adults, as they are active and independent (small) agents, and yet irreplaceable, valuable, innocent beings. Belonging in or close to nature, playing about in trees and or in the wilderness of the Norwegian outdoors, children are considered both creative and imaginative but also vulnerable (Cf. Aries 1960/1970 and Cunningham 2005 for the historical construction of children as vulnerable innocents). Intrinsically, such an understanding of children and childhood comes to shift the focus from potential differences between children (e.g., gendered, ethnic or class-related differences) and to an emphasis on children as a group⁴⁰ constructed as a binary opposition to grown ups or

³⁹ See also similar articles and claims made in British media by for instance Ecpat or Save the Childrens Alliance and other NGOs

Beddoe (2007) Missing Out: A study of child trafficking in North-West, North-East and West Midlands in the UK. http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/missing_out_2007.pdf

Helen Crawley (2006) Child first, migrant second: Ensuring that every child matters. ILPA policy paper 40 This is by no means to say that this is an exclusively Norwegian construction. The construction of “children” as a group essentially different from grown ups is clearly also evident in, for instance, Swedish popular images of children. Cf. Astrid Lindgrens “Madicken”, “Vi på Saltkråkan”, “Emil i Lönneberga” and “Pippi”: books for a similar perception of children as creative and imaginary creatures engaging in innocent play outdoors and also Beppe Wolgers popular lyrics “The enigmatic people” for further examples of such an construction.

Det gåtfulla folket - Barn är ett folk och dom bor i ett främmande land,
detta land är ett regn och en pöl.

Över den pölen går pojkarnas båtar ibland,
och dom glider så fint utan köl.

Där går en flicka, som samlar på stenar,
hon har en miljon.

Kungen av träd sitter stilla bland grenar

adults. These views balance and negotiate between a more “rights-based” concept versus one that puts “innocence” to the fore (Meyer 2007: 88) and tends to mystify children. Children are sometimes constructed as active agents but also as passive objects (and Meyer argues that this is still most often the case). This stresses that the adult society is responsible for the well-being and safety of children (Dagbladet 2001.10.28, Dagbladet 2004.10.29, 2004.11.02). By claiming that every unaccompanied asylum child belongs to the category of children, a strong claim is made both to their rights and society’s direct obligations toward them to offer care and protection.

Incidences of missing unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children in Norwegian newspapers accentuated what were articulated as “the needs” of migrant children on the political agenda. As a child the “asylum child” was to be given optimal developmental and environmental conditions (like any other Norwegian child). Evident in different calls for action with regard to unaccompanied minors was the ambivalence of how the refugee center was not considered an optimal environment for a child (Aftenposten 2002.09.17, 2002.09.05, 02.02.10). As a case of “any child”, the unaccompanied child in this sense constructed as intrinsically belonging to the outdoors, where they should preferably be engaging in creative and imaginative playfulness under loving parental scrutiny. Yet, the unknown fates of the missing asylum-seeking children are of equal concern, as nobody knows their whereabouts. Norwegian adult society is obliged to protect them (children and hence also unaccompanied minors) from possible dangers. Criminality or prostitution, threats of external origin, are emphasized as risks that the missing asylum-seeking children may encounter on the outside of the asylum center.⁴¹ According to Engebrigtsen (2002, 2012), criminality and prostitution tend to be constructed as practices that oppose the very idea of childhood (“the end to

i trädkungens tron

Där går en pojke som skrattar åt snö.

Där går en flicka som gjorde en ö av femton kuddar.

Där går en pojke och allting blir glass som han snuddar.

Alla är barn och dom tillhör det gåtfulla folket.

⁴¹ Prostitution or criminal activities are often constructed as the more downfallen parts of a modern urban lifestyle, and are hence often viewed as the binary opposition to the construction of the countryside and rural life. Intrinsically, in the Norwegian national narration, there is a construction of the countryside as a safe haven for kids away from the lure and dangers of urban life. The optimal developmental environment is often intrinsically perceived as synonymous with the possibility to playfully and freely explore the countryside and gain access to enough “fresh air”. Cf. Gullestad (1997) for a parallel discussion of how the national narrative on children and childhood is rather ambivalently opposed by how modern Norwegian urban living has forced children to stay more and more “inside” (i.e., in the home or in so-called “school leisure programs”) as opposed to being outdoors in order to keep them safe from the possible dangers of strangers or playing close to traffic, etc.

childhood”), hence also positioning children in prostitution/sex work as subjects outside of childhood or as damaged children, for example.

In the Norwegian newspaper narratives, calls for action are made in order to keep the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children safe from harm. These claims often stress the importance of shifting the legal responsibilities of unaccompanied minors from the migration board to social services. Voices in the Norwegian context also worked to highlight unaccompanied minors as “orphan cases”, that is cases of children for whom for different reasons the Norwegian state has a specific set of obligations. This discussion circles around the cost of having an orphan in care of the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (*Bufetat*) versus the cost of having a young unaccompanied minor in the care of the Norwegian Directorate for Immigration (*UDI*), thus indicating that Norway treats unaccompanied minors different from Norwegian children.

4.1.2 Sweden — 2002 the Carlslund Scandal and the asylum-seeking child as an exploited child

During the early winter of 2002, a headline in the Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet* read, “87 children vanished without a trace”. (*Aftonbladet*, 2002, *87 barn spårlöst försvunna*. 2002-01-20). The article contained a list of the nationalities, ages and dates the unaccompanied minors went missing,⁴² all of whom had disappeared from the Carlslund Refugee Reception Centre and other refugee centers in Sweden since the year 2000. These missing children were framed rather distinctly in the Norwegian narratives. Whereas the Norwegian media tended to frame missing unaccompanied minors as a “missing children problem” and “children” as a homogenous group, in the Swedish context specific weight was given instead to the gender, ethnicity or country of origin of the vanished unaccompanied minors. The stories were also more strongly connected to the particular context of the Carlslund premises⁴³ and specific episodes that happened there.

The incidences at the Carlslund Refugee Reception Centre and its media coverage could be analyzed as a critical discursive moment (or a media happening) that became a point of reference in the Swedish articulation of asylum-seeking children disappearing from official contact. (The Carlslund scandal also colored the Norwegian debate, bringing with it a bit of a differ-

42 The list in *Aftonbladet* consisted of 59 such missing children (see *Aftonbladet 87 barn spårlöst försvunna*. 2002-01-20).

43 Carlslund in the region of Stockholm was a special unaccompanied minor refugee reception center under the auspices of the Swedish Migration Board.

ent focus. Cf. Aftenposten 2002, Selvmordsforsøk og mistanke om barneprostitusjon i fulle asylmottak. 02.02.10.)

Hundreds of unaccompanied minors come to Sweden every year. Some are sent here as “anchor children” so that other family members can come later on. In recent years, a new group has emerged: children who come here to be abused in the sex trade. In a preliminary study we have found minors, children, who have been taken to Sweden only to be exploited in prostitution, says Kajsa Wahlberg at the National Police (*Rikskriminalpolisen*). The cases that have become known to us cover five minors. One of them, a 16-year-old Lithuanian girl, lived under such harsh conditions that she was driven to commit suicide in Malmö early 2000.

(Aftonbladet 2002 *87 barn spårlöst försvunna*. 02.01.20)⁴⁴

In the above extract a scandal surrounding unaccompanied refugee children that traceless disappear is brought to light. The children are conceptualized as either sent to Sweden or recruited directly from the refugee center, later to be exploited in prostitution. The narrative connects the issue of disappearances to what is articulated as a steady flow (or “hundreds”) of children, or sometimes seen as a dramatic increase of children that according to Aftonbladet arrive by themselves to Sweden every year.⁴⁵ Because of the mass influx, the reception facilities designed to cater to this specific group of asylum seekers simply cannot carry the burden.⁴⁶

In the narrative we learn that many of the unaccompanied children are simply considered “anchor children”, sent away by parents hoping to get a residence permit in Sweden on the grounds of kinship ties to the child. Seen as “anchor children” they are not to be understood as “orphans” nor as “refugees”, but rather as “economic migrants” shipped away by their calculating parents hoping for a better life in the West on the grounds of family unifica-

44 The incidence with the girl who committed suicide in Malmö was a narrative that later inspired the Swedish movie director Moodyson to produce the movie “Lilja-4ever” about a young abandoned girl, who driven into forced prostitution in Sweden later commits suicide in order to escape her terrible ordeal.

45 Dagens Nyheter (2002): Lång utredning knäcker barnen 02.06.03

Dagens Nyheter (2002) BO anser att samhället smiter från ansvaret, 02.06.03

Dagens Nyheter (2002)“Obegripligt älta om resurser. 02.06.03

46 Aftonbladet: Mellin, L: Kaos i rättsstaten. 02.11.26

Aftonbladet: TT: Flyktningbarn försvinner spårlöst. 02.09.08

Aftonbladet: Kino, N and Svärdrkrona, Z: Självordsforsök även på andra slussar för flyktingar. 02.02.11

Aftonbladet: "Socialen måste ta ansvar för de ensamma barnen". 02.01.23

Aftonbladet: Kino, N: Ministern: Detta chockar mig, jag ska kontakta Rikskriminalen. 02.01.21

Aftonbladet: Kino, N: Hon tvingades att sälja sex. 02.01.21

Aftonbladet: Johansson, A and Kino, N: 17-åring: Alla vet hur lätt det är att sälja sin kropp. 02.01.20

Aftonbladet: Johansson, A and Kino, N: 87 barn spårlöst försvunna. 02.01.20

tion with the unaccompanied child (Cf. Engebrigtsen 2002, 2012; Stretmo 2010 for an analysis of the concept of the “anchor child” in Swedish and Norwegian policy). In comparison to what is put to the fore as an older or intrinsically more normalized form of child migration (the anchor child), is the increasing group of minors (seen as originating from Eastern European countries) (Cf. Aftenposten 2002, *Selvordsforsøk og mistanke om barneprostitusjon i fulle asylmottak*. 02.02.10) or constructed as possibly risking the fate of becoming part of a hidden sex slave workforce. They are furthermore conceptualized as a novel challenge and hence a cause of concern for Swedish society.

Following Aftonbladet narrative, the newspaper and other Swedish papers published sequels of articles that focused on the fate of the Carlslund youngsters, revealing what was narrated as rather stressful conditions there.⁴⁷ The misfortunes of the minors were linked to the dramatic lack of capacity at the Carlslund premises and how prolonged asylum processes created unbearable conditions for unaccompanied minors (Cf. Dagens Nyheter 2002.06.03).

A mass influx of abandoned children or street kids or social orphans arriving from Eastern European countries (or from a former Soviet republic) are framed as picked up and sent to Sweden solely to engage in prostitution or as simply being smuggled in. These children are moreover framed as left in the care of the Swedish Migration Board and there are certain signals alerting them to how things are not as they should be. In this narrative it is also made clear that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are conceived as passive objects, easily “dumped” on the doorstep of the Swedish Migration Board or *picked* out of the refugee center by adult strangers, simply vanishing or passively ending up in prostitution. This construction is parallel to the

47 Other Swedish newspapers such as the Expressen and the Göteborgs-Posten also wrote sequels on the Carlslund episode and took up on the Aftonbladet lead describing the terrible conditions at Carlslund.

Expressen: Svensson, B: Han ser barn i nød lämnas utan hjälp. 02.02.12

Expressen: Marteus, A C: Flyktingmottagning –Skandalen i Carlslund. 02.02.12

Expressen: Lindehag, L: Flyktingbarnen: Kommunen hjälpte inte till - var rädd för grannarna.02.02.11

Expressen: Lindehag, L: Flyktingbarnen: Anton, 17, försökte ta sitt liv. 02.02.11

Expressen: Lindehag, L: Flyktingpojkar misstänks tvingas in i prostitution. 02.02.10

Göteborgs-Posten: Gelotte, G: Flyktingbarn ska få en fadder - Förbättringar för de ensamma barnen utlovas efter debatt i riksdagen.02.02.21

Göteborgs-Posten: Åhnberg, A and Heilborn, C: Hjälp flyktingbarnen nu. 02.02.17

Göteborgs-Posten: Editorial: Flyktingbarnen måste skyddas.02.02.13

Göteborgs-Posten: Parkrud, E: "Flyktingbarn är kommunens ansvar". 02.02.13

Göteborgs-Posten: Svensson, P: Misstänkta fall i Göteborg: "Jag har haft flera fall där barn kan ha sexutnyttjats". 02.02.12

Göteborgs-Posten: Svensson, P: Misstänkt barnprostitution - Flera självmordsförsök bland ensamma unga på flyktingluss. 02.02.10

discourse of innocence and the understanding of children as essentially “innocent beings” and hence in need of protection but also to be protected from adults (see e.g., Meyer 2007). They are constructed as unintentional victims of cruel fates (Cf. Miller and Vitus 2009).

Last winter it was reported how badly unaccompanied children are doing in the reception centers. Some (of them) end up in prostitution. Some attempt suicide. Several disappear without a trace. In 2001, 69 children vanished from the reception centers. In May this year, 48 are still missing. There is a high risk that some of them end up in the sex trade. Moreover, it is too easy to pick up a child from the centers. Presenting an ID card and give away an address is enough in order (for someone) to go away with an unknown child.

(Göteborgs-Posten 2002 *Flyktingbarnen nonchaleras*. Ecpat/ Helena Karlén contributing to the debate 02.11.06)

At Carlslund, there are also specific narratives of two boys who have been observed while leaving the center at “odd times a day”, being picked up by cars and who come back to the center in the middle of the night. Afterwards the boys “have taken long showers” which, could be indicating that they want to wash themselves clean and they are “suddenly” in possession of money (Expressen 2002.02.10). Though the story is rather speculative as it somewhat indicates a “rape narrative” (“washing oneself clean of shame” or money as a possible exchange for sexual services. Cf. Loseke 2003 for a discussion concerning the constructing of so-called formula stories.) The situation at Carlslund is put to the fore as acute: children have been trying to commit suicide, another girl has allegedly been raped and the unaccompanied minors are in a terrible state of mind.⁴⁸ The asylum-seeking children at Carlslund were framed as in-risk of sexual abuse or already harmed or even damaged children.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Simultaneous to the Carlslund debate, the Lukas Moodysson movie “Lilja 4-ever” had its release by late autumn 2002. The film tells the tragic tale of the young Eastern European girl Lilja, who is trafficked to Sweden for prostitution and who later commits suicide in order to escape her terrible ordeal. This film gave much fuel to the ongoing trafficking debate in Sweden as well as in Europe in general, and has in many ways been influential in constructing a formula story of “trafficking” in the public debate (see e.g., Stretmo 2006 unpublished, for similar findings.). The Lilja narrative is interesting to see also with regard to the discussions in the wake of the Carlslund ordeal and the conceptualizations of the possible dangers threatening unaccompanied children.

⁴⁹ Aftonbladet (2002) “Hon tvingades att sälja sex”. 02.01.21, “17-åring: Alla vet hur lätt det är att sälja sin kropp”. 02.01.20), “Ministern: Detta chockar mig, jag ska kontakta Rikskriminalen”. 02.01-21, “Socialen måste ta ansvar för de ensamma barnen”. 02.01-23, *Självordsförsök även på andra slussar för flyktingar*. 02.02.11.

Usually, the minors arrive without either a passport or other identification documents and claims kinship to someone. This person might just as well be a pimp. The girls themselves rarely tell anything. They are often so broken down by threats, physical abuse and rape, that they do not dare to reveal any information to the Swedish authorities.

(Expressen 2003, *De tvingas sälja sex*. 03.11.18)

Although the Expressen (2002.02.10) highlighted the episode of the Eastern European boys endangering sexual abuse, the accounts of the vanishing children at Carlslund (but also in other parallel stories in the aftermath of the Carlslund scandal) were often made more explicit with regard to underlying gendered notions, where unaccompanied girls were often framed as seemingly more vulnerable than boys (Cf. the quote above). Gender was also constructed as an important factor when constructing a typology of possible dangers. Girls were emphasized as more exposed to sexual abuse and being forced to prostitute, while the boys to a greater extent were framed as in danger of being forced to conduct criminal activities.

The narratives of unaccompanied children disappearing were clearly constructed as connected to the lack of resources at Carlslund (or other facilities/refugee centers for unaccompanied minors, Cf. Göteborgs-Posten 2002 *Misstänkta fall i Göteborg – “Jag har haft flera fall där barn kan ha sexutnyttjats”*. 02.02.24) because of the need for more staff, a quicker asylum process and a call for action with regard to the Swedish Migration Board’s perceived lack of (proper) supervision.⁵⁰ Some of these claims connect to a focus on children as specific rights holders (Cf. the Norwegian framing of missing asylum-seeking children as a “missing child”) for whom the intolerable situation in over-crowded refugee centers are constructed as an inappropriate and offensive environment. Corresponding calls were made in order to appoint a custodian/guardian to all unaccompanied minors. Similar to the Norwegian newspapers’ narratives, the transference of the social dimension of the reception of unaccompanied minors from the Swedish Migration Board to the local municipalities was also understood as a possible reason to safeguard unaccompanied minors. Such action was deemed necessary in order to protect unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from risks. The threats and dangerous situations (also in accordance with the Norwegian articulation) were conceived as stemming from the outside of the premises and hence a call for stricter controls over unaccompanied children in order to keep them safe — including having unaccompanied minors’ DNA tested in order to

⁵⁰ Göteborgs-Posten (2002) *Flyktingbarn ska få en fadder - Förbättringar för de ensamma barnen utlovas efter debatt i riksdagen*, Göteborgs-Posten (2003) *Ohållbar situation för barn utan uppehållstillstånd*. 03.09.24, Expressen (2002) *Flyktingbarnen: Kommunen hjälpte inte till var rädd för grannerna*. 02.02.11.

avoid being picked out of the refugee center by someone falsely claiming to be next of kin — were equally seen as proper solutions.⁵¹ The overall Swedish understandings differ from that of the Norwegian, stressing that missing unaccompanied minors are cases of missing children. The Swedish articulation in a much more distinct manner connects the disappearances or risk typology to the ethnic and gendered features of a specific child, in other words a child framed as exploited and exposed, a child at risk.

4.1.3 Norway and Sweden 2005 and onward — “Disappearing asylum-seeking children” as cases of trafficking or smuggling

From 2005 onward, a rather parallel narrative emphasizing the disappearance of Chinese children was highlighted in Norwegian and Swedish newspapers. In the aftermath of these articles, missing asylum-seeking children were often made synonymous with incidences of missing Chinese unaccompanied youngsters to such an extent that these events became a point in time (a critical discursive moment), where the problem of missing asylum-seeking children was reformulated and refined in Swedish and Norwegian public discourse.

In November 2005, Scandinavian newspapers ran sequels about the Chinese children that arrived in Norway and Sweden (and also to and through Denmark) as unaccompanied minors in order to claim asylum. Within a very short time period these children, who were in possession of Chinese passports, later disappeared from official contact. This method of operation had similarities to the different narratives of missing unaccompanied minor featured in Norwegian and Swedish newspapers from 2000-2005. The re-telling of these incidences, however, often dwelled on the specific operation of the Chinese children: how they had traveled by airplane (using China Airways) from China, what kind of luggage and amount of money and clothing they were in possession of, whether or not they had mobile phones with them, and so on. These pieces of information were framed together as constituent parts of a bigger picture: similarities between different episodes were constructed as pointing to a possible *modus operandi*.⁵²

⁵¹ Göteborgs-Posten (2002) *Misstänkta fall i Göteborg - "Jag har haft flera fall där barn kan ha sexutnyttjats"*. 02.02.24; Aftonbladet (2003) *"DNA-tester kan stoppa handeln"*. 03.11.18, Aftonbladet (2003) *Flyktingbarn får inte DNA testas*. 03.12.21.

⁵² See also Danish newspapers for a similar construction of missing unaccompanied minors as possible smuggled or trafficked migrants:

Meanwhile it is obvious that (it is) organized criminals (that) are behind the transportation of asylum-seeking children to Norway. According to an internal memo from Nya Kripas (Norwegian police) there is a lot of evidence (supporting that) criminals are behind the transportation of asylum-seeking children to Norway, and their subsequent disappearances. The Chinese children that arrive in Scandinavia are virtually identically dressed. (Dagbladet 2005, *UDI anmelder ikke forsvinningene*. 05-11-30)

Since November 1, 2004 approximately 100 Chinese youngsters have arrived at Arlanda (airport) and claimed political asylum there and then disappeared. ... The youngsters have arrived without (any) travel documents or carrying false travel documents and they claim to be less than 18 year of age, which the majority of them probably are. They reveal very little, if any, information about themselves and their origin. At arrival they carried similar equipment and clothing, and the same amount of money. (Expressen 2005, *Stockholmspar anhållt för att ha smugglat barn*. 05.11.26)

The concept of the “Chinese child” is not personified by any name (real or false) or individualized by any personal history. Typically they are highlighted as just being “Chinese children” or “Chinese youngsters”, and it is stressed that their presence in either Sweden or Norway is the result of how people smugglers or human traffickers utilize the asylum system.

The representation of the Chinese children and the fixation on their country of origin is interesting to view in accordance with popular images of East Asians in European/Western popular culture. According to Les Back (1996), Mac An Ghaill (1994), Connolly (1994) and Hübinette (2006), there is a tendency in popular belief to feminize East Asian men and boys and in parallel also to over-sexualize or erotize East-Asian women and girls. Therefore, constructing the East Asian boys or Eastern masculinity as weaker, and more silent and obedient than European/Western masculinity and hence less manly

Kinabørnene er kommet i grupper på tre-fire personer. De ankom med falske pas fra Hongkong, hvorfra der ikke kræves visum, og rejseruten gik for dem alle over Moskva. Børnene var forsynet med mobiltelefoner, som de fik instrukser gennem, og de afgav enslydende forklaringer. Og lige pludselig forsvandt de fra centrene. »Vi gik til politiet, fordi vi frygtede det værst tænkelige: Misbrug af børnene«, siger Jørgen Chemnitz. (...)Der er altså intet, der tyder på, at børnene er blevet bortført. Og børnene er tilsyneladende heller ikke bange for at komme videre til næste bestemmelsessted. Det kan være, fordi de stoler på at blive godt modtaget, men det kan også være, at de ikke ved, hvad der venter dem. »Det ville hjælpe os, hvis børnene selv ville fortælle. Men det vil de ikke«, siger Johnny Lundberg. (Politiken 2005, *Kineserbørn: Kinabørn på mellemlanding mod uvis fremtid*. 05.12.27)

(Cf. *Ibid.*)⁵³ Characteristically, in the missing Chinese children representation in Swedish and Norwegian newspapers is how the kids are described as rather genderless and uniform. It is often the sameness of their appearance — wearing similar clothes, a backpack — that is accentuated.⁵⁴ Although the kids appear to be desexualized (made genderless) a sexual vulnerability is often still implied. Other elements similar to the popular (Western) image of East Asians are stressed: the children are constructed as obediently following instructions given by “unknown” traffickers/criminals, and it is pointed out that they seem to “lack the will” or interest to cooperate with the official authorities. They do not expose or give any information with regard to their further plans to the police (or the authorities mistrust the information that the children actually chose to give them).

It can be interesting to view the representation or image of East Asians that implicitly lies in the tale of the missing Chinese children as intrinsically more collectively oriented compared to more individualistically-oriented Europeans (Cf. Wickström 2009). This also points to a double exposure: on the one hand the children are framed as compliant and submissive to their smugglers/traffickers, but on the other hand they are somewhat untrustworthy, showing us (Westerners, border police and the Swedish Migration Board and Norwegian UDI officers) a smiling face while holding their real intentions hidden (see e.g., Said 1979 for such ambivalent understandings). Such a visualization could also be linked to the concept of what is sometimes called the “Dionysian child”⁵⁵, which stresses children and youth as untrustworthy

⁵³ Common images of East Asian women and girls are constructions of the “China doll”, the “Lotus flower” or the “Geisha girl” (skilled in Asian ancient sex arts, see also Said 1979: 207 for a discussion on how oriental women have been featured at the center of European men’s power fantasies and presented as expressing “unlimited sensuality”), but also in the narrative of, for instance, Puccini’s “Madame Butterfly”. Sometimes East Asian women and girls have been considered submissive, docile, obedient femininities, sometimes good-hearted (but helpless and in need of rescue) victims of sex trade or war or oppression. Yet, at other times Asian femininity is synonymous with a disloyalty, coquettishness and manipulation.

⁵⁴ This image could clearly also be associated to a narrative of a collectively-oriented “Mao’s China” with a uniformed men and women in “Mao tunic suits” (or the so-called *Zhongshan zhuang* costume) and unisex haircuts.

⁵⁵ Meyer (2007) argues that though a view of children as individual rights bearers has emerged, children are still most often understood as “innocent vulnerables” in need of adults to do things to and for them. This view also corresponds to what Jenks (1996) argues is two predominant yet contradictory images or the division between the Apollonian versus the Dionysian child in Western conceptualization. Whereas the Dionysian view on children is that of original sin, childhood as a time to learn discipline and children as devious and impish pleasure seekers, the Apollonian child corresponds to a construction where the child is seen as innocent and happy yet passive, to be spared from specific places and (adult) activities. Though the Apollonian perspective seems more in tune with today’s way of grasping and theorizing children, there clearly consist legacies with reference to both perceptions operating in contemporary discourse. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child could also be said to accentuate a third perception or figure of thought, the Athenian Child, where

and devious characters in need of guidance and parental/adult supervision (Jenks 1996; Meyer 2007). What is evident in both Norwegian and Swedish newspaper articles is that missing unaccompanied minors from now on more are underscored as ethnic beings, and that the risks they endanger are connected to their ethnicity. Though the subject in focus is framed as of Chinese origin, “missings” are sometimes also connected to vanishing unaccompanied children of other nationalities.

These narratives are connected to popular formula stories related to a discourse on migrant trafficking. By the force of threat or by concealing the real purpose of the migration from the migrant, their autonomy is curtailed at the hands of cruel and brutal traffickers who take advantage of the migrants’ exposed situation as undocumented (Cf. Aradau 2008, O’Connell Davidson 2005, 2006; O’Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007; Stretmo unpublished). They are brought forward as victims of rather tragic circumstances (Miller and Vitus 2009) that passively receive instructions per mobile phone of what to do next. This image is also in parallel to the discourse of innocence, where children are seen as passive entities and adults on the contrary are constructed as doing things to and for them (Meyer 2007). In the narrative of the Chinese children these adults are often described as faceless yet evil perpetrators such as smugglers or human traffickers.

Still the storyline also ambivalently mixes instances of trafficking narratives with narratives of smuggling, hence sometimes constructing the unaccompanied Chinese child as actively (could they be possible economic migrants?) searching for a better life in the West, as rather happy-go-lucky in contrast to scared and frightened and eager to continue their journey. There is a “double exposure” in the manner in which the Chinese children are put to the fore as smuggled but in parallel also as a possible trafficked victim. There is also a double-exposure with regard to the construction of the Chinese children as passive:

They do not say much. They will not answer questions and (they) are not interested in our information. They rather go out and take a walk, Keleta Kibreab says. They claim that they have no relatives (and) that their parents are dead and they do not know why they are here or where they are heading. - They’re programmed not to be afraid, they do not care when we say we are concerned about their safety, says Keleta Kibreab. Children in reception centers

children are viewed as active and interpretive subjects (Jenks 1996; Meyer 2007), hence opposing the perceptions stressed with regard to the Dionysian or Apollonian constructions. (As an alternative point of view the Athenian Child has not been that influential with regard to common sense Western European understandings, *Ibid*).

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are free to go — the law provide little opportunity in order to lock them in - so they are free to go wherever they want, whenever they want. They all carry the same luggage as the previous China Children who disappeared: 10 000 (Swedish crona), a cell phone, a backpack, but no identification papers. (Aftonbladet 2007, *Fyra nya barn kom från Kina -När som helst är de försvunna* 071203

The narrative sequels of missing Chinese children featured in Swedish and Norwegian newspapers during autumn 2005 and onward were put to the fore in a similar fashion. The articles also served as points of reference in order to highlight specific needs of unaccompanied minors at large (i.e. living conditions in refugee centers, etc.) Furthermore, these narratives sometimes reconnect instances of other groups of missing unaccompanied children by articulating risk and danger typologies in connection with the specific ethnic framing of the missing children. While Eastern European kids (Carlslund narratives in Sweden) or the missing asylum-seeking children in the Norwegian construct, for example, were considered risking a life in either forced prostitution or criminality, the missing Chinese children are now written about as in risk of being smuggled or trafficked to Europe in order to feed the hungry black market's cheap and flexible child labor needs (Cf. the industrious and cunning hands of East Asian workers). In this regard it is similar conducts that are conceived as possible risks, but the dangers confronting missing Chinese children are much more explicitly framed or put to the fore as social problems in connection to (irregular) migration: the modus operandi that is accentuated as novel threats are linked to irregular or criminal transgression of national borders. The tales of missing Chinese children are represented as vivid and striking stories. There is a clear and central victim focus, the unaccompanied minor subject often becomes constructed as a passive entity in the hands of wicked traffickers or smugglers.⁵⁶ Migration is accentuated as an anomaly and children travelling by themselves are considered extremely vulnerable, out of place beings and in the wrong hands (Cf. Stretmo 2010 for similar lines of reasoning). Yet, unaccompanied minors are not framed as entities "on their own", the responses and calls for action made in the newspaper narratives often take into account (naïve) parents or traffickers or smugglers, possibly lurking behind the scenes. In the quote from Aftonbladet (2007) above there is also a lot of ambivalence with regard to the children's passiveness, as the Chinese children concurrently are put to the

⁵⁶ Expressen (2006) *Regeringen vill försvåra barnsmuggling* 06-05-17, Expressen (2006) *Kinesiskt par dömt till fängelse för barnsmuggling* 06-06-09; Göteborgs-Posten (2006) *Barbro Holmberg: Så kan smuggling av barn stoppas* 06-05-17; Dagbladet (2007) *Kinesiske barn stikker av fra asyl.* 07-07-01; Verdens Gang (2006) *Asylbarn drar fra Danmark til Norge* 06-05-24.

fore as avoidant or elusive (“they do not answer questions and seem uninterested in our information”).

After 2005, the narratives of missing Chinese youngsters colored the narration of disappearing asylum-seeking minors in both Norway and Sweden. Associations were established between practices such as trafficking/smuggling and instances of missing unaccompanied minors. Missing asylum-seeking children were now conceptualized as possible victims of trafficking or children being smuggled. Instead of being an issue in connection with the social problem of missing-children (see Best 1990), incidences of missing asylum-seeking children were now conceptualized as issues in relation to irregular migration (i.e., constituents of a migration problem) and the fact that there could exist “markets” (demand) where children are purchased as goods.

It is terrible that they are still gone. One thing is the traffickers, but the core is the fact that there is a market (for the buying and selling of children). There are resourceful people (out there) who are ready to buy the children. Bekkemellem (the Children’s Minister) wants to identify how the kids could arrive here the way they did. They came alone, equipped with mobile phones and (were in) contact with (their) traffickers. The Minister wants an evaluation of all the government agencies that became involved after their disappearances. It is important to coordinate law enforcement, children social service, health centers, schools and reception centers in this work. - We need a plan of action in order to know what to do when such situations arise. And we must have our focus on this issue. Norway is no longer spared, she said.

(Aftenposten 2006 *Færre asylbarn*. 06.03.07)

According to this rationale, the “market for children” is interestingly constructed as an evil stemming from the “outside”, from which the nation (in the extract above, Norway) is no longer spared. A call is hence made for more coordinated actions between social services, schools, migrations boards, and the police in order to safeguard unaccompanied children. Meyer (2007) claims that when issues such as paedophilia and sexual abuse were constructed as social problems, Western European countries viewed them with ambivalence, hence constructing them as phenomena rather peripheral to modernity. In the extract above the “market for the purchase of children” is constructed as something of foreign origin (Norway is no longer spared), yet it is also ambivalently connected to the “inside” and (faceless) economical resourceful people (Norwegians? Swedes?) buying them (resourceful people who purchase children).

The narratives of missing unaccompanied children were differently framed between Norway and Sweden from 2000-2005, and in comparison to the more joint Norwegian and Swedish newspaper framings from 2005 until mid-2008. Still, these three problematizations also held something in common: in the popular problematizations specific authorities were made accountable. The authorities thought to be in charge of unaccompanied minors (i.e., the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the Swedish Migration Board) were made to answer strong accusations of child neglect. In Norway, the issue of asylum-seeking children led to a public demonstration in January 2008, and a call for immediate action with regard to missing asylum-seeking and unaccompanied children and youngsters. In order to keep unaccompanied minors safe, a reevaluation of the reception system of unaccompanied minors was stressed. Corresponding demands were also highlighted in Sweden. Some of the preferred actions accentuate the need for a “softer scheme” (i.e., more caring strategies) (Cf. Chapter 2, section 2.4.2) with regard to unaccompanied minors. When positioned as vulnerable unaccompanied children were constructed as subjects in need of care and parental supervision. However, when framed as “undecidables” the importance of tougher or more restrictive or disciplining measures were opted for, both directed at the minors (keeping them safe for their own good) but also targeted at possible traffickers or smugglers. The need for joint police cooperation and intelligence was also more clearly articulated with regard to the missing Chinese children. What is interesting is how the system changes called for tended to favor a separation of tasks within the existing reception system rather than addressing the issue of asylum regulations or the restrictive migrations scheme.

What was still evident was that instances of missing unaccompanied minors were emphasized as a specific social problem to which Swedish and Norwegian authorities should take prompt action by engaging new authorities (e.g., local municipalities, social services, custodians, etc.) responsible (Cf. Rose 1999/2008 and the processes of “responsibilisation”) for the caring and handling of them. In the next part of Chapter 4, I examine how the Swedish and Norwegian demands for action with regard to the missing asylum-seeking and unaccompanied minors were answered in official policy.

4.2 Voluntary versus involuntary disappearances — Norwegian and Swedish official conceptualizations and responses to the media’s calls for action

In section 4.2, I examine the main narratives put to the fore in Norwegian and Swedish policy with regard to instances of missing unaccompanied minors. Though it seems rather evident that occurrences of missing asylum-seeking children were much more visible or dominant in the media’s storylines, official responses clearly existed. Some reports and investigations were, for instance, made by Swedish and Norwegian authorities in order to get a grip of the scale and extension of the problem of disappearing unaccompanied minors: the Swedish Migration Board conducted a thorough review of cases where unaccompanied minors had gone missing in the aftermath of the Carlslund scandal (Swedish Migration Board 2003) and the Norwegian Ministry of Justice made a similar assessment of missing asylum-seeking children in 2008 (Justis og politidepartementet 2008). Other answers to the ongoing media debate have been in the form of press releases, but also in circulars and guidelines and explicit plans of action on the handling of unaccompanied minors who go missing from asylum centers (Cf. Polismyndigheten i Stockholms län 2008; UDI 1999, UDI 2010).

With regard to the media debate and newspaper narratives, Norwegian and Swedish authorities had a distinctive manner in which to problematize instances of missing minors. One of these representations drew on the trafficking discourse (according to the Regeringen/Swedish Government 2007 it is, for instance, stated that unaccompanied migrant children risk sexual exploitation because of their vulnerable positions as minor migrants without adult carers), whereas other cases of disappearing unaccompanied minors were comprehended in terms of how children were at risk of being “picked out” of the refugee centers by extended family members; therefore, bringing the system of unaccompanied minors living with extended family and friends outside of refugee centers (and state control and supervision) into questioning (Cf. UDI 1999; SOU 2004: 71, 85). “Missing unaccompanied children were moreover framed as unaccompanied asylum seekers deciding to go “underground” or *awol*⁵⁷ in order to resist deportation either as: a) related to the fear

⁵⁷ The English concept *awol* (absent without leave) mirrors the Swedish official term: *avvika/avvek* that is used when instances of missing unaccompanied minors are described in official context. In Norway, the authorities

of “adults trying to pass as children” (*Överåriga*) (a conceptualization that I analyze in Chapter 5, section 5.2); b) children/youngsters who received a rejection on their asylum application; or c) what were conceptualized as so-called “Dublin cases”.

In the following section I investigate how the issue of missing asylum-seeking children was narrated from official authorities, including the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), border police, and Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (IMDi), and Sweden’s National Board of Health and Welfare and Swedish Migration Board (amongst other public authorities in Norway and Sweden).

talk about *försvinninger* (i.e., “disappearances”/“missings” but also of “voluntary” versus “involuntary” missings).

4.2.1 Voluntarily missing children — “Children in transit” or “Dubliners” and the narratives of strategic migrants

Children or youth in transit or the so-called “Dublin cases” or “Dubliners”, (*Dublinärenden* or *Dublinare*) are concepts that construct a link between cases of unaccompanied asylum seekers that go missing and the Dublin Convention. The Official Journal of the European Union (2007) limits any third country national to apply for asylum and to have their claim investigated only in the first country of entry to the EU. In accordance with the Dubliner concept, there is also a fear that the limitations of movement set by the Dublin Convention could possibly open up for more methodical and/or calculating asylum behavior amongst third country nationals claiming asylum in any of the EU27 countries, and Norway, Iceland and Switzerland (Cf. UDI 2003/2007).⁵⁸ According to this rationale unaccompanied minors are constructed as sometimes deciding to leave a country that has rejected their asylum claim in order to apply for asylum elsewhere and enhance their chances of obtaining a residence permit. (It is interesting to link this conceptualization to the British debate on “asylum shopping”) (Cf. Hansen 2008; Watters 2008. Cf. The Daily Telegraph 2008). The construction of this “voluntarily motivated” absence is also interesting to connect to the understanding of “anchor children” (Stretmo 2010) or “strategic adults” trying to pass as children (see Chapter 5 ‘The vulnerable child, ambivalent teen and strategic adult’). These subject positionings have the common denominator that they imply a tactical course of action or approach to the asylum system by the asylum seeker.

In addition, some asylum seekers who use Norway as a transit country have no desire to sustain an application for asylum in Norway and travel further without informing (us). This applies to unaccompanied minors as well as families with children.

⁵⁸ This apprehension is also interesting to analyze with reference to the climate in which the Dublin Convention was created in the first place. While constructing a common border separating the inner from countries beyond the EU and their nationals, a need to coordinate and harmonize asylum practices came about. On the one hand, this was done in order to share “the burden of asylum-seekers” (Cf. Brekke 2004). On the other hand, many EU countries feared a situation where third country nationals could take advantage of the fact that each and every one of the EU27 countries could be a possible “door” to the EU, or that migrants then could strategically apply for asylum in more than one country (Cf. Hansen 2008 for an discussion regarding “asylum shopping” as a popular constructions). The EU27 (UK, Ireland and Cyprus still have some dispensations), and Norway, Iceland and Switzerland have ratified this convention. The Dublin Convention is furthermore backed by the construction of the so-called Eurodac system, which contains, amongst other things, a database consisting of fingerprints taken from asylum seekers older than 14 years of age that have applied for asylum in either one of the EU27, Switzerland, Iceland, and/or Norway.

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(UDI 2009, *Savnede asylbarn flere forklaringer*. www.udi.no/Oversiktsider/UDImener/Avisinnlegg-og-kronikker/2008/Savnede-asylbarn---flereforklaringer/)

A third of the absconding youngsters had applied for asylum in another “Dublin-country” before coming to Sweden. We have definite information that 17 of the young people missing either went to seek asylum in another country after they registered as absconders in Sweden, or that they already had a residence permit in another EU country.

(Swedish Migration Board 2003, *Genomgång av ärenden där ensamkommande asylsökande ungdomar avvikit under år 2002*. 2003-10-20, N-11-2003-18696)

With regard to the image of the Dubliners, single events or individual behavior are pieced together and conceived as constituting parts of a specific *modus operandi* for strategic asylum seekers. Important features of the Dubliners’ construction is the idea that the missing kids or youngsters did not have either Norway or Sweden as their designated country in the first place. Instead they were “stranded” there because they were detected by officials. According to this rationale these kids are constructed as deciding to “disappear” before their fingerprints and other information are taken from them. (This construction also somewhat mirrors how the Chinese children in the Swedish and Norwegian media narratives were sometimes seen as avoiding official contract and enroute to somewhere else). At other times, missing unaccompanied children and youngsters are constructed as sometimes endangering their asylum claim, hence deciding to abscond in order to avoid being deported. These are sometimes referred to as “failed asylum-seekers” (Cf. Watters 2007; Hansen 2008). Missings are also put to the fore as examples of kids that have already been registered as asylum seekers in a different Dublin country (or their asylum claim has been rejected there or they have obtained a residence permit but have for some reason chose to leave), and they hence abscond in order to circumvent being transported back to their Dublin country. This is a construct that can be analyzed as equivalent to the idea of strategic asylum shopping (Cf. the narrative of “Mustafa” a underage asylum seeker who according to the claims in Arbeidsgruppe/Justis- og Politidepartementet, 2008: 22, has applied for asylum in five other European countries under different identities and as an adult).

Another important feature of the official transit narrative is how the Swedish, Norwegian or joint EU asylum reception systems intrinsically become viewed as a possible target or the victim of such strategically operating migrants. In order to protect the asylum system or the national borders, further registrations and more in-depth controls of migrants are opted for (see e.g., Rapport fra abeidsgruppe/Justis- og Politidepartementet, 2008: 38; UDI

2002a; Gränspolisavdelningen Polismyndigheten i Stockholms län 2008: 5ff) Although these plans of action highlight the fact that cases of missing asylum-seeking children correspondingly could be of concern, the official narratives also work to legitimize why the Norwegian nor the Swedish authorities do not have any exact measures of missing children, or why they do not really engage in their disappearances.

(Internationally) A SPECIAL PROBLEM consists of unaccompanied minors who leave the reception centers without specifying where they go. In Norway there are fortunately a decrease in the number of unaccompanied children who leave the reception centers. Of those who have left the centers this year, no one is considered to be “matters of concern”. Most of them are believed to be factual adults above 18 years of age with no legitimate grounds for asylum stemming from Eastern Europe and Northern Africa. For many it is furthermore confirmed that they are registered under another identity and as adults in other European countries.

(UDI 2003a, *Når barn søker asyl blir de ivaretatt som barn.* 03.07.22 Sic.)

The official problematizations could be said to counter the claims raised in the media narratives by directing focus from the possible fates of missing unaccompanied children to what is framed as a need for further restrictive policy measures. Strategies to more effectively separate the “wheat from the chaff” or asylum seekers who are constructed as having (legitimate) asylum claims from the “others” are accentuated. Official strategies hence also imply a stricter control over unaccompanied minors. The different official constructions of missing unaccompanied children are hence directly opposing some of the constructions of missing asylum-seeking children made by the media, as the missing minors are accentuated as strategic subjects instead of passive victims and as possible adults instead of children. Sometimes the Swedish and Norwegian official narratives highlight the need for more control and supervision of unaccompanied minors in order to avoid strategic migration, and yet correspondingly (as in the following quotation) also indicate a tone of ease: it is written as rather unproblematic that asylum seekers sometimes decide to travel elsewhere. (Given these circumstances it would be rather unwarranted of Swedish and Norwegian authorities to even process an asylum application.)

An unaccompanied child arriving in Sweden is normally always in need of a residence here. However, there are some conceivable situations where it would be unnecessary to initiate an asylum application process. For example, if it is found that the child only after a few days’ stay in Sweden intends to travel on to another country.

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(Socialstyrelsen 2005: 429)

In The Swedish National Board for Health and Welfare's (Socialstyrelsen 2005) narration, it is also understood as important not to promote an asylum application if there could be indications that the child might be going somewhere else.

Numbers from Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Holland and Norway demonstrates that unaccompanied children transit these countries in order to travel to other Schengen countries.

(The Swedish Police in Stockholm/Border police 2008, *Gemensam handlingsplan gällande hanteringen av ensamkommande asylsökande barn och ungdomar som reser in via Arlanda och avviker eller riskerar avvika från kommunala boenden*. Gränspolisavdelningen Polismyndigheten i Stockholms län 2008)

Though cases of missing children constructed as Dubliners or children transiting (Schengen countries) are considered as rather unproblematic, these so-called voluntarily absconding youngsters or kids are at the same time pointed out as rather ambivalent subjects:

Boy 15 years of age seeks asylum in November 01. During his asylum process he stays at Carlslund. At all times while in Carlslund he seems anxious and restless. He often fights with other young people and the staff. In a conversation with his migration board officer, February 2, the boy reveals that he had previously applied for asylum in Denmark under a different name. The officer then contacts the Danish authorities who inform that the boy has a residence permit in Denmark, and that he is registered there as missing. The boy says he wants to return to Denmark. The next morning he is missing from Carlslund. Late in the evening that very same day the Danish authorities notify that he has reappeared in Denmark. (Swedish Migration Board 2003)

In the quote from the Swedish Migration Board (2003), we encounter one such unaccompanied minor who presumably did not have Sweden as his destined country. The boy is constructed as a child in transit or as a migrant selectively picking out the most attractive destination (Cf. UDI 2002a for similar representations). This is also a storyline that frames unaccompanied children and youngsters as active entities in comparison to the media's framing of unaccompanied minors as passive victims of harsh circumstances. In contrast to the media's image of the passive missing, exploited or smuggled/trafficked child, children in transit are constructed as guided by their own actions and are highlighted as subjects intentionally choosing to abscond. They are also understood as selectively picking the right country to

reside in or actively pursuing their dream destination.⁵⁹ Such a seemingly motivation driven migration is often intrinsically constructed or handled as though it somewhat opposes the very idea of forced migration. Watters (2008) and Eide and Broch (2010) note that a migrant actively in pursuit of a better life, can also be the holder of genuine asylum claims or being forced to migrate. In the official narration though such interpretations are often not implied: on the contrary “tactical asylum behavior” (or for instance applying for asylum in different countries under different names/identities) is often problematized as indicative of a subject that might not have a genuine asylum claim.⁶⁰

In the extract above from the Swedish Migration Board (2003), the unaccompanied minor described is also highlighted as somewhat untrustworthy: the quote tells the story of a 15-year-old unaccompanied boy who had been granted residence in Denmark, a presumably important piece of information he for some reason chooses to withhold from Swedish authorities. It is also explained that he behaves restless, uneasy and problematic, getting into fights with the staff and the other unaccompanied minors in his group home. The 15-year-old vanishes, later to be found in Denmark where he has a residence permit. The disappearance per se is described as something rather unproblematic and is even presented as a “happy ending story”: a teen troublemaker who decides to go back to Denmark.

In Norwegian official narration the image of the transit child or the Dubliner construction are also closely associated with the concept of the strategic adult migrant trying to pass as a child (see e.g., Chapter 5 ‘The vulnerable child, ambivalent teen and strategic adult’). These missing children are conceptualized as “*reelle voksne*”, that is *de facto adults* who, because of their weak asylum claims, are constructed as trying to pass as minors in order to get a residence permit in Norway. Missing unaccompanied children are in line with such an articulation not to be understood as matters of worry (*bekymringssaker*) because they elope, but rather problematized as a possible

⁵⁹ This somewhat comes to mirror the construction of the ambivalent Chinese children who were sometimes feared to be in the hands of evil traffickers/smugglers, yet also conceptualized as somewhat problematic and avoidant (Cf. The quote from Aftonbladet 2007, in section 4.1.3.).

⁶⁰ This is interesting as it also points to an official comprehension where asylum claims are constructed as having an objective interpretation to them (Cf. Wikström and Wettergren 2013), and as if the evaluation of asylum claims were totally independent of overall contextualizations, where various countries sometimes even decide to comprehend these contexts differently. One such example is how groups of Iraqi asylum seekers during 2008 were granted residence in Norway while their claims were rejected in Sweden, just because the UDI (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration) versus the Swedish Migration Board made different judgements of the overall situation in Iraq.

burden to the entire asylum system because of their strategic actions and multiple asylum applications.

The Swedish and Norwegian official constructions highlighted here can be said to somewhat counter the claims made in the media narratives, before and after 2005. In this context missings are underlined as problematic from the point of view of the asylum system or Swedish and Norwegian border controls, and not from the point of view of individual children risking harsh circumstances. Vanished minors are consequently put to the fore as problematic subjects as their behavior or practice is accentuated as calculated. Strategies to coordinate intelligence and develop new and better measures between Scandinavian or Schengen countries, are emphasized as necessary in order to get a better grip of what is framed as “the problem of tactical asylum behaviour” (Cf. Swedish Migration Board 2003; Rapport fra arbeidsgruppe/Justis- og Politidepartementet, 2008).

4.2.2 Involuntary disappearances — “victims” and exploited children

Although Norwegian and Swedish authorities’ counterclaims write off some of the criticism raised in the wake of the media debate on missing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, the official narratives also reveal a totally different theme. Simultaneous to the construction of ambivalent transit children or voluntary absconders, narratives on vulnerable or exploited children coexist in official problematizations. Unaccompanied children who disappear without a trace are sometimes highlighted as “children in risk of exploitation”, a concept in concurrence to that of the exploited child in Swedish newspapers (see 4.1.2) but also in line with “smuggled or trafficked victims” (see e.g., UDI 2005/2008, 2007b, Politiet 2009 for similar lines of reasoning).

According to a report by the Swedish Integration Board (*Integrationsverket* 2003), it is assumed that children risk being sent away and sexually exploited or otherwise abused (i.e., sexually or in a hidden labor market) in Sweden and Norway.

In some cases, parents have been misled to send their children to Sweden in order to offer them a better future. Usually the family or their friends become indebted in order to acquire a ticket or assistance by human-smugglers. It also occurs that children and youngsters are brought here to be exploited, sexually or otherwise, but the extent of this is unknown.

(Integrationsverket 2003:1)

In the extract above from the Swedish Integration Board (2003) such incidences are highlighted in relation to cases of people smuggling. The exact extent of this child abuse is unclear (“the tip of the iceberg”), but according to the Integrations Board’s rationale “some cases” points to parents’ naivety, being misled to believe they were sending their children off to a better life. The unaccompanied children in this construction are understood as passive (they are sent off) and their parents as goodhearted yet somewhat too trusting. Instances of missing children are framed in relation to the sexual abuse of children, but also as a migration-related problem. This “problem” of children disappearing are ultimately their parents sending them off to Sweden or people smugglers utilizing minor migrants on a black market.

In June 2002, three girls, born in 1986, 87 and 89, apply for asylum together with an adult brother. In July 2002, the girl who was born in 1987 is found in connection to a traffic accident. In the car is also a girl born in 1989 originating from another sibling group. The car is driven by a man who is under the influence of cocaine and not related to any of the girls. In the car is a cash amount of 70,000 (Swedish crowns) and (women’s clothing and wet underwear) that suggests prostitution. The girls are placed in a children’s home (*barnhem*) during the night. The social service in the municipality (where the children was found) decides to put them in compulsory care (“LVU § 6”), but the children abscond.
(Swedish Migration Board 2003)

The Swedish Migration Board (2003) review of cases of unaccompanied children who had gone missing during 2002 (this report came in the aftermath of the Carlslund scandal) highlights a narrative similar to the Swedish media representation of exploited children. In the above quote the Board narrates a series of events, including three girls aged 14-16 found together with a man. The girls are described rather shortly: we are told very little about them except their age and gender. At the same time the extract seems wide open for speculations (the women’s clothing and the cash amount found are constructed as indicators of prostitution, or at least pointing to some sort of sexual exploitation of the three minors). The fact that the man is described as being under the influence of cocaine and that it is explained that he does not seem to be related to the girls works to indicate that there is something “devious” going on. The framing of the man (maybe he is a junkie?, why are the girls in his possession?) underlines criminal activities but does also highlight the girls’ vulnerability with this particular man. In the short narrative it is the work of the municipal social service that is put to the fore as a “hero” vainly attempting to save these girls from what is underlined as a possibly terrible ordeal.

This narrative mirrors the Swedish newspaper stories in the aftermath of the Carlslund scandal: at-risk unaccompanied children and youngsters are considered as girls risking forced prostitution.

Girl from Serbia/Montenegro arrives in Sweden together with a husband and a brother in law. The girl is severely bruised when she arrives. The husband is adult. The girl is pregnant and she during her asylum interview she claims to be orphan.

(Migrationsverket 2003)

Furthermore, the Swedish Migration Board (*Migrationsverket* 2003) highlights the narrative of a pregnant girl who arrived in Sweden accompanied by an adult husband and her brother-in-law. The extract is rather ambiguous in the way this specific incidence is narrated: we do not know anything more about her than her nationality, that she “claims” to be orphaned and is married (could she be a possible child bride?), and that she is described as beaten, severely bruised (we are never told by who or in what context). The construction of the Serbian/Montenegrin girl gives away quite different associations when compared to the children in transit/Dubliners. Instead the quotation chisels out a rather speculative and intriguing scenario that raises more questions than we are being fed answers: a young girl from a previous Eastern European country, hence indicating that this could perhaps be a story indicating human-trafficking (a “Lilja-4ever” narrative?). The fact that she is accompanied by her adult husband points to possible questions of whether or not she could possibly have been married against her will, or whether or not it is the husband who has been hitting her. (Could this be a narrative of a battered woman? Cf. Loseke 1992). Interesting in this regard is how, for instance, “age” is used in a way that increases the girl’s vulnerability amid the husband. As we are never told their exact ages, one can only speculate as to how we would frame the relationship between the pregnant girl and her adult husband if we were told that the girl was in fact 17.5 years old and the husband 19 versus a scenario where we had been told that she was 16 and he 45. (Cf. Matsson 2010). The fact that she is also described as pregnant further enhances her position as in an exceptionally vulnerable and exposed state. The girl appears to be extremely fragile and thus in need of social protection and care.

The unaccompanied child constructed in these two narratives come to frame the missing asylum-seeking child as subjects in risk of abuse, but also as vulnerable, exposed and passive objects. The construction is also somewhat gendered: the children found to be in risk by the Swedish Migration

Board (2003) were all girls, while the case of the absconding Dubliner on the contrary was constructed as a boy/young man.

Unaccompanied children's situations have attracted much attention during recent years. More than anything, focus has dwelled on the lack of agreement in-between the (Swedish) Migration Board and the social services regarding their division of responsibility, resulting in children being caught between two stools. Some children disappear from the centers and there is a suspicion that some of them become exploited in prostitution. ... Within the unaccompanied (category) are also the children that cross borders on their own account counted in. These children generally originate from the neighbouring countries and can hence easily find their way to Sweden. Experience from the Council of the Baltic Sea States indicate that most of these children have suffered some form of physical or sexual violence in their homeland, they have poor attachment to their families and have learned to live on the street. They survive by committing petty crimes and by selling sex.

(SOU: 2004:71: 86)

In the Swedish SOU:71 from 2004, unaccompanied minors — regardless of gender — are pointed out as at-risk children due to their position as vulnerable and dependent on adults (Cf. *Regeringen* (Norwegian Government) and the so-called Soria Mora Declaration 2005: 71). Their vulnerability is furthermore enhanced by the fact that the social service and the Swedish Migration Board are perceived as unable to work out their obligations and responsibilities with regard to these children. The fact that unaccompanied minors have vanished seems intrinsically to be accentuated as a possible consequence of the overriding responsibilities between the social service and the Board. Similar to the accusations put to the fore in media narratives (during 2000-2005 and from 2005 onwards), the reception system as such is brought into questioning. Children from the Baltic region are furthermore highlighted as a novel group of unaccompanied children endangering further abuse in Sweden. These children are highlighted as exploited children, children and youngsters used to taking care of themselves (i.e., possible “social orphans”) by committing petty crimes and selling sexual services. Similar to the Swedish newspaper articles of the Carlslund scandal, these children are constructed as passive objects and as somewhat problem children due to their experiences, but also as they are conceptualized as active — migrating on their own, making a living by committing crimes or selling sex.

In cooperation with the Director General of Public Prosecutions, the government will establish a working group to study disappearances of children from reception centers and propose measures that can be implemented to prevent and investigate cases of disappearance of mi-

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nors from reception centers. If we are to succeed in our goal of combating human trafficking, more human traffickers and criminal networks must be exposed and prosecuted. By intensifying the hunt for criminal networks, we send a clear message that human trafficking is unacceptable in Norway. (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2006)

The framing of involuntary disappearances as part of a trafficking discourse is also evident in Swedish and Norwegian official narratives from 2005-2008, as cases of missing asylum-seeking children are highlighted with regard to the Norwegian official action plan (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police 2006) and the Swedish action plan against human trade (*människohandel*) from 2007 (Regeringen 2007:167). Similar to the Swedish and Norwegian newspaper narratives, missing unaccompanied minors are constructed as constituents of irregular migration-related problems to be combated by, for example, better intelligence, joint police cooperation, and “victim detection” programmes.

A limitation of (their) freedom of movement, complemented by a closer monitoring of minors, are presumably the only measures which may reduce the risk of both voluntary or involuntary disappearances. Both adults and minors travel illegally in the Schengen area, and are often reported as missing in the country in which they have applied for asylum. Such disappearances can hardly be effectively prevented unless the control over the minors is considerably sharpened. (Rapport fra arbeidsgruppe/Justis- og Politidepartementet, 2008: 38)

At the heart of Norwegian and Swedish official responses to cases of missing unaccompanied minors is the balance between handling voluntary versus involuntary absconders. In order to come to terms with these two rather ambivalent constructions, the exploited and vulnerable child (often constructed as a girl) versus the active and calculating minor (often highlighted as a boy), further regulation and closer monitoring are constructed as legitimate actions. In order to monitor strategic migrants but also take care of vulnerable children restrictive measures are opted for. In the quote from the Justice and Police Department (2008), restrictions on the individual freedom of movement are put to the fore as tangible ways to manage disappearances. As a kind of “lock them in in order to keep them safe” rhetoric (Stretmo 2010, Cf. Bufetat 2008/2009) such a solution also connects to many of the claims made in the newspaper articles analyzed in this chapter (Cf. *Aftonbladet* 2002; *Göteborgs-Posten* 2007, *LVU kan hindra människosmuggling*) but are also constructed as legitimate means to further safeguard the asylum system from Dubliners, children in transit and other migrants constructed as utilizing the Swedish and Norwegian asylum systems. In this

sense the public and the official problematizations argue in favor of an enhanced power exercise, as unaccompanied minors are framed as subjects in need of authoritative governing for their own sake (Cf. Rose 1999; Watters 2007).

In the official narratives of missing unaccompanied children, the problem at hand is often primarily constructed as a “migration issue” related to the bad circulation of illegitimate refugees or trafficking/smuggling. With regard to missings joint efforts and better-suited technological apparatuses to strengthen shared border intelligence are deemed necessary (Cf. UDI 1999, 2002a, 2001/2008; Swedish Migration Board 2003; the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police 2006; Regeringen/The Swedish government 2007; Gränspolisavdelningen Polismyndigheten i Stockholms län 2008; Politiet/the Norwegian police 2009). The calls for specific technologies (“technologic governing”, Rose 2008) are also illustrative of strategies aiming to manage risks: inventing novel and better procedures is seen as easing the border management and control of problematic subjects.

The Swedish and Norwegian official framing from 2000-2010 is also interesting in how the missing unaccompanied subject are constructed as a *migrant child*. The Declaration of Soria Moria (2005), constructed by the then newly-elected Norwegian red-green coalition government (2005-2009) in order to outline the priorities, objectives and focus of Jens Stoltenberg’s 1 (and later his 2 cabinet), can be used as an illustration. With regard to this text, children were singled out as a specific target group (Cf. mentioned in Chapter 10 ‘Children, education and science’, page 42-49), whereas unaccompanied minors (also a target group of the Declaration) and the outline for a better and more well functioning reception system are mentioned within the area Immigration and integration in Chapter 17 (page 70). To some extent this illustrates how the problem of disappearing unaccompanied minors and unaccompanied minors as such could be said to be excluded from official concern with regard to children’s overall conditions. One analysis could be that instead of framing unaccompanied minors as cases of “any other child”, they are highlighted as a specific children group and with reference to disappearances or missings as subjects belonging to the field of irregular migration. This places the unaccompanied minor within an “exception-space” (Cf. Watters 2007) outside the official discourse of children and children’s needs.

4.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, my objective has been to analyze how instances of missing unaccompanied minors have been put to the fore in newspaper narratives and in Norwegian and Swedish policy.

The newspaper narratives of missing or disappearing asylum-seeking children analyzed here constitute an important contextualization that can explain the change of mode of conduct in the reception of unaccompanied minors that came about in Sweden in 2006 and Norway in 2007. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that media discourse constitutes an important formation ground or act as a “looking glass” into public opinion. In this perception the media does not necessarily predict policy outcomes, but is rather seen as a cultural forum for public opinion to be counted in its own right. In my analysis of the debate concerning the missing asylum-seeking children, the media plays the role of the agenda setter, demanding action and/or liability from authorities in Sweden and Norway (or from the Swedish Migration Board and UDI, but was also an important actor with regard to a specific problematization of the issue at hand. One can also argue that some of the official conceptualizations similarly color the media narratives. In this sense the construction of missing unaccompanied minors, as a specific social problem, transformed and evolved during the period of 2000 until mid-2008. This turned the problematization of missing minors into a value-added process, both in the analyzed newspaper narratives and the official responses. When newspaper articles featured storylines of unaccompanied minors this was done, nearly without exception, by also mentioning a narrative of missing minors. This constructs narratives of missing unaccompanied minors as important in order to analyze important dynamics within the discourse of unaccompanied children and youngsters.

In my analysis of newspaper articles describing instances of unaccompanied minors missing from official registration, it is clear that these cases were conceptualized rather similarly in Sweden and Norway, though distinct dissimilarities also existed. Central to missings, in Sweden and Norway, issues were raised on the perceived lack of liability and responsibility of the Norwegian and the Swedish migration boards with regard to guarantees the safety and the well-being of unaccompanied minors. Other similarities were found in the way the problematizations of missing asylum-seeking children became entrance points in order to highlight the needs and rights of individual unaccompanied children on a political agenda, but also in order to question the accountability of the authorities in charge of handling them.

Some interesting differences were also evident in the material. For example, incidences of missing asylum-seeking children were highlighted with some recurrence in Norwegian newspapers as early as 2000 until 2005, while it took until 2002 and a series of specific occurrences at the Carlslund Refugee Reception Centre before cases of missing asylum-seeking children were raised and articulated as a specific problem to the same extent in the Swedish context. The Carlslund scandal became a critical discursive moment in order to construct the phenomenon of missing asylum-seeking children in Swedish context.

Three diverse newspaper problematizations on missing asylum-seeking children could be singled out. Between 2000 until mid-2005, Norwegian newspaper articles were more prone to frame incidences of missing unaccompanied minors as “cases of missing children” (Cf. Best 1990), hence accentuating similarities between children (and children as right holders) and society’s responsibility to these children (like any other Norwegian-born child). Similar incidences in the Swedish context, between 2002-2005, were viewed more in terms of damaged children at risk of sexual exploitation and were related to a growing concern that migrant children could be sold in Sweden. The fear was also conceptualized with reference to novel groups of Eastern European children, highlighting differences between groups of children due to ethnicity and gender.

During the fall of 2005, it was incidences of missing Chinese children that caught public attention in both Norway and Sweden. Constructed and emphasized as proof of trafficking or smuggling of migrant children to and through Sweden and Norway, the problem of missing asylum-seeking children were now instead re-conceptualized as first and foremost a migration-related problem. Missings were associated to flows of bad circulation such as trafficking and smuggling. The missing unaccompanied child was raised as a possible victim of human trade: trafficked or smuggled in order to be used as part of a hidden slave workforce on a black market. Stories drawing on vulnerability were seen as comprehensible with regard to tales of different ethnic, aged and gendered categories. This also puts cases of missing unaccompanied minors to the fore as issues related to the “problem” of irregular migration.

In the Swedish and Norwegian newspaper narratives, calls were made to transfer the responsibility of the daily care of unaccompanied children and youngsters from the UDI and Swedish Migration Board to the municipal social service and The Swedish National Board of health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) and Bufetat (Norway). This division of labor, or of “rationali-

ties”, were also constructed as a mode of conduct that could reassure that the asylum claims of unaccompanied minors were properly investigated by an institution different from the one in charge of their daily care and housing. In terms of governing, this system change was motivated as more rational and in better consistency in order to safeguard the specific needs of asylum-seeking children (Cf. Miller and Rose 2008). This system change was brought about by the Norwegian and Swedish authorities in 2006 and 2007, respectively. (Cf. Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 of this book). In the Swedish and Norwegian context the new division of labor made the municipal social services (under the supervision of the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) and the Bufetat) in charge of following up on and housing unaccompanied minors from their very first entry, during their asylum process and after if they obtained a residence permit (Swedish Migration Board and SKL 2010; Bufetat 2008/2009a, 2008/2009b, 2010).⁶¹

When analyzing Norwegian and Swedish official responses or policy on missing unaccompanied minors, it becomes evident that the dimension of daily care of unaccompanied children and youngsters versus the investigative tasks are colliding rationalities. In the cases of missing minors, Swedish and Norwegian authorities stress the need for more transparency with regard to unaccompanied children living in private lodging with extended family members and/or friends. Inherent in the official problematizations — and mirroring some of the problematizations raised in newspaper narratives — are the framing of possible dangerous or hazardous situations as stemming from the outside of the refugee centers, consequently calling for more control or monitoring. By ensuring more transparency, control and regulation of unaccompanied minors the authorities correspondingly also construct and single out the group of unaccompanied minors as a specific client with specific needs.

The official narratives of missing unaccompanied minors also included counterclaims by separating what the Norwegian and Swedish authorities articulate as “voluntary absconders” from “involuntary disappearances”. Voluntary absconders are framed as subjects related to “bad circulation” such as bogus asylum seekers and asylum shopping, in other words strategic migration. Involuntary disappearances, however, draw on the Swedish media narrative (2002-2005) of the damaged or exploited child. Evident in the official narratives in both countries is an understanding of missing unaccompanied minors as cases of migration-related concern. In my analysis, I illustrate

⁶¹ Before 2006 in Sweden and 2007 in Norway, the municipal social service had become involved in the lives of unaccompanied minors after and if the child or youngster had obtained a residence permit in either Sweden or Norway.

this by pointing to how the unaccompanied minor “client” becomes interpreted ambivalently and differently on whether or not the disappearance is constructed as voluntary or not. In this sense missing children in official policy also mirror the narratives of missing Chinese children (2005-2008), constituting a double-exposure due to their position as an undecidables (Cf. Bauman 1991). Norwegian and Swedish official narratives construct links between trafficking or smuggling (and/or calculating asylum behavior) and missing minors at an earlier stage than what were articulated in newspaper articles. In this sense the period between 2000-2005 were formative in order for the media to demand liability from the authorities for missing minors, whereas some of the official conceptualizations (i.e., the understanding of missing unaccompanied minors as connected to a migration-related problem) also seemingly color the media’s representations after 2005. Voluntary versus involuntary missings are constructed as legitimizing more signaling politics (Cf. Brekke 2004): the policies opted for in order to keep the vulnerable children safe tend to also indirectly focus on how to secure the borders from traffickers and smugglers or the asylum system from strategic asylum behavior. This also points to the official construction of the missing unaccompanied minor subject as an ambivalent one: on the one hand a possible victim or a vulnerable child, yet on the other hand a possible strategic migrant.

The cases of missing asylum-seeking children are also illustrative of how different and sometimes rather incompatible solutions to a problem coexist, such as a shifting view of unaccompanied children as either vulnerable hence making a softer and more child-friendly scheme seem justified, or as constituting a potential security risk, therefore calling for a restriction on their autonomy and movement (Cf. Rose 2000). It is also interesting how public and official articulations shift focus between the different solutions and explanations, thus pointing to the different contradictions and ambivalences that exist within the discourse of the unaccompanied minor.

5

The vulnerable child, ambivalent teen and strategic adult

In Chapter 4, I demonstrate that the media coverage of issues of missing unaccompanied minors proved to be quite influential with regard to demanding the authorities in charge of unaccompanied minors bear responsibility, and hence highlight the need to reform the Swedish and Norwegian reception systems. I also argue that the call for a new mode of practice or conduct in dealing with unaccompanied children and youngsters was motivated by the fear of missing or absconding minors. Changes of conduct were also a consequence of other official problematizations. In this chapter, I present my second case, analyzing how unaccompanied minors in a more general sense were framed within Norwegian and Swedish official policy from 2000-2010 and the fundamental issues as to the official handling of them. My objective is to highlight how unaccompanied minors were accentuated as a specific refugee category due to inherent constructions of age and consequently some of the actions that these articulations made legitimate in Norwegian and Swedish practice.

When Norwegian and Swedish authorities create literature and reports containing storylines of unaccompanied minors, they are often illustrated with pictures of happy-go-lucky and capable children playing football or attending school, for example, children that gaze right into the camera and smiling cheerfully. (Cf. IMDi 2009). Sometimes these children are pictured while engaging in what is often seen as normal and even typical everyday activities. The only specifically different feature about these kids — in comparison to what we often think of as Swedish and Norwegian youth — is often only implied by the color of their skin and/or their clothing (see e.g., Barne- og familiedepartementet 2000 or the picture of the young woman featured on the front page of the Swedish Migration Board's 2010 pamphlet wearing a chador). At other times, for instance in a selection of newspaper

articles and an official report by the Swedish Migration Board and The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL 2010), unaccompanied minors are instead conveyed as rather anonymous children and youngsters standing in bare and empty rooms. They are typically pictured from behind, looking away from the camera and with their heads bent and their shoulders hanging, indicating a state of sadness and grief (see e.g., the image of the little boy sitting with his head bent over his knees in the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat 2000) report. These are all images in line with how different victim categories are often conveyed in popular media (Cf. Loseke 1992, Ryding 2005, Thörn 2004; Uhnoo 2011 and Holgersson 2011). At other times, these kids are pictured staring right at the camera with a serious look on their faces and their arms crossed as if asking you something or calling out for your immediate attention (Cf. UNICEF 2010). Sometimes unaccompanied children are featured as teens, but occasionally they are also pictured as small children, sometimes even as toddlers. Sporadically these newspaper articles, official reports, guidelines, and action plans do not convey any pictures of unaccompanied minors at all, but are illustrated by a picture of a blank and often barren exterior of an asylum reception center.⁶²

These seemingly ambiguous and rather different visual framings of unaccompanied minors are evident in official and public narratives in Norway and Sweden. When unaccompanied minors are framed in these different ways, something clearly happens to the problematizations of them and the manner in which we as an audience understand what an “unaccompanied minor” is. Therefore, speechmaking can be seen as an instrument to call for action but also to legitimize practices, as well as an essential tool to communicate, legitimate and bring forward a specific view of reality (Cf. Foucault 1993, Ryding 2005: 101, and Chapter 4 of this thesis). According to Foucault (1993), dis-

⁶² Aftenposten(2008) Politiet leter etter asylbarn

Aftenposten (2007) Aftenposten Slår alarm om asylbarn

Aftenposten (2007) Enslige asylbarn vanskelig å gjenforene

Aftenposten(2006) - Asylbarn drar til Norge

Aftenposten(2006) Kamp for asylbarn

Aftenposten (2006) To barn forsvunnet fra mottak

Aftenposten (2006) Ett av to asylbarn forsvinner

Aftenposten (2006) Vet ikke hvor barna ble av

Aftonbladet (2002) Hon tvingades att sälja sex

Aftonbladet (2002)17-åring: ”Alla vet hur lätt det är att sälja sin kropp”

Aftonbladet (2002) ”Ministern: Detta chockar mig, jag ska kontakta Rikskriminalen”

Aftonbladet (2002) ”Socialen måste ta ansvar för de ensamma barnen”

Aftonbladet (2002) ”Självordsförsök även på andra slussar för flyktingar”

cursive power lies within the authority to define and categorize (Ibid). Formulated in policy as guidelines or principles for official and/or national action, specific problematizations of a given social problem imply something real for the group of people to which a certain action imbedded within a program of governing is directed (see e.g., Lenz Taguchi 2009). Though as I argue in the short introduction to this chapter, and in relation to the particular framings of the missing unaccompanied minors in Chapter 4, there rarely exists one coherent or overarching view of a given subject. Instead, several conflicting images exist at the same time, all struggling to prevail.

Though many similar constructions are highlighted in Norwegian and Swedish policy, there are some interesting differences with regard to what actions or practices that are constructed as necessary. Firstly, in section 5.1, I analyze how Norway and Sweden constitute the category of the unaccompanied minor as a specific rights holder, different from the adult asylum seeker and from accompanied children. Secondly, in section 5.1.1, I study how this problematization has made Norwegian and Swedish policy focus on questions about age. In section 5.2, I demonstrate how, as a consequence, Sweden and Norway legitimize and adopt routines or conduct in order to assess the chronological age of the asylum-seeking subject. As I state in the introduction to Chapter 5, age can be represented differently depending on context. In section 5.3, I analyze whether or not being positioned as a subject in the asylum process or one who has obtained a residence permit allows for how Norwegian and Swedish authorities make sense of the chronological age of the unaccompanied minor. In the following text my aim is to deconstruct the concept of unaccompanied minors with regard to official talk on chronological age. Central to this analysis is also to highlight some of the specific and practical implications that these problematizations bring forth and legitimize in practice.

5.1 The vulnerable migrant as a separated child

It was during the 1970s and beginning of the 80s that a care-oriented perspective colored the construction of a refugee reception system (Cf. Malkki 1995). The “refugee” as a specific subject of knowledge and figure of speech was hence brought forward. Malkki (Ibid) argues that the reception system that came about in the aftermath of the Second World War had as its main mode of conduct to control and regulate millions of so-called “misplaced persons” or refugees. The old concentration or internment camps with their

military logic were ironically better suited for this purpose, and many of them were therefore rebuilt as refugee camps. In the millions of refugees and misplaced persons of the Second World War two European governments saw potential risks to the new and fragile peace. The “refugee” was conceptualized as an anomaly to a system of fixed borders where citizens were considered as belonging to a specific country or state (Malkki 1995: 508). This process is also in line with logic of governmentality: as structure, order and control were desired, and achieved, by the construction of a whole reception industry aiming to closely monitor, register and observe refugees (Cf. Dean 2010).

During the 1970s and 80s, a new understanding of refugees was highlighted: instead of viewing refugees as potential risks, they were instead considered as suffering a special trauma unique to all refugees. As a victim of war and therefore forced seek refuge away from the country of origin (homeland) and crossing borders was seen as causing a total loss of identity and sense of coherence, and hence totally disrupting the natural order of belonging (Cf. Alinia 2004). The refugee as a subject in need of support, adequate healthcare and social assistance was born. Migration was still viewed as an incongruity to be monitored and governed, it was instead the framing of the refugee problem that shifted. Research (in the fields of social work, psychology and sociology) on refugees also helped homogenize different narratives and experiences of being “in refuge”, and to be a refugee was transformed into a uniform identity considered part and parcel to all refugees (Malkki 1995: 510-513). According to Malkki (Ibid), the contemporary European reception system has ambivalently fluctuated between calls for stricter control and regulation of refugees versus a view wherein more care- and health-oriented strategies are appropriate.

Since Malkki’s (1995) study of the development of a European system of refugee reception, a shift from a talk of refugees to one of asylum seekers in official rhetoric is evident. This replacing of words has been underlined by a similar transference of meaning, dividing the “real refugees” from the possible “bogus asylum seekers” (Cf. Fassin 2001, 2005; Schierup, Castles and Hansen 2006; Hansen 2008, etc.) The talk of asylum seekers instead of refugees mirrors a climate of mistrust, where the subject’s legitimate grounds for claiming asylum is brought into question.

The construction of unaccompanied minors as a group with special entitlements corresponds to what Malkki (1995) and Fassin (2005; 2011) understand as “refugee production”, which also works to single out a deserved group of asylum seekers (Cf. Thomson 1971; Watters 2007). Although it is often written that unaccompanied minors do not consist a homogenous group

(Cf. Bufetat 2008/2009 a and b), there are some elements that are understood as uniting unaccompanied minors and hence separating this category from other groups of asylum seekers or adult refugees. In accordance with the understanding of the refugee as having witnessed or experienced traumatic ordeals, and thus forced to flee their homeland, unaccompanied minors are often understood as having experienced terrible torments in their country of origin. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have furthermore access to a reception system and certain procedures that aim to bring the specific interest of separated and asylum-seeking children into focus. This particular and child-friendly reception is based on an inherent and underlying set of ideas and notions of refugees and asylum-seekers that also works to separate and homogenize asylum-seeking children from asylum-seeking adults.

The (Swedish Migration) Board's guidelines state, among other things, that before the Board's officers make a decision in asylum cases, they need to take into consideration how a deportation would affect the child's psychosocial development. They should also visualize this consideration in the decisions made.

(Swedish Migration Board 2006:15)

The (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)) pays special attention to children without parents who seek asylum in Norway. These children have more rights and are prioritized by the UDI when handling their asylum application and re-placement. There are also specific limitations on the return of minors to their country of origin. In recent years, specific reception centers have been developed to cater to this group and the reception centers have psychiatric expertise available. All unaccompanied minors are currently placed in separate units specially adapted to this group, and where the staff have (special training) or refugee- and child-competence.

(UDI 2004)

What separates the unaccompanied minor from the asylum-seeking adult is that in addition to being a refugee, the minor is also a child. Processing an unaccompanied minor's asylum application is hence considered essentially "diverse" from all of the "ordinary" asylum cases (see e.g., the quote above from Swedish Migration Board 2006, but also in Brendler 2003:28). When reviewing a child's asylum application (regardless of whether or not the child is unaccompanied or traveling with next of kin) other accounts than merely the claim for asylum need to be investigated simultaneously. Seen in the quote from the Swedish Migration Board (2006) above, these other accounts are important when, for instance, evaluating the impact of a rejected asylum application with regard to the child's psychosocial development. Inherent in

this conceptualization is the construction of children as more vulnerable and more delicate than adults. Children are considered rights holders due to their status as vulnerables (Cf. the Apollonian child). According to this rationale, it is logical and essential that child asylum seekers are treated differently from their adult counterparts, and that working with them implies skills in both child and refugee care and expertise.

In the Norwegian and Swedish context, highlighting the exposed situation of the unaccompanied minor is often done to draw attention to the need for more child-specific and/or child-sensitive measures, implying that the methods used to take care of adult asylum seekers requires re-evaluation when applied to unaccompanied minors. As vulnerable children, for instance, they need not have had experienced traumatizing ordeals like adults in order to obtain residence on humanitarian grounds or for reasons of compassion (see above quote from the UDI 2004). Implicit in such an understanding is that what constitutes distress for the adult could severely traumatize a child.

Annually, a large number of children and young people without accompanying parent or legal guardian arrive in Sweden to seek asylum there, known as unaccompanied children. Although their life stories and backgrounds vary, common to them all is that they are in an exposed situation.

(Migrationsverket, Socialstyrelsen och Sveriges kommuner och landsting 2009)

Central to the understanding of unaccompanied children is that they are coessentially different from adults, but that their state as children without parents further enhances this vulnerability. If it was quintessential to the construction of refugee trauma to be separated from one's homeland and hence in a state of identity loss, it is the separation from parents that is seen as particularly damaging to unaccompanied minors. Being in a foreign and unknown country and having suffered traumas are considered highly stressful factors, but it is the separation from parents and caregivers that is articulated as the common denominator and what constitute unaccompanied minors as the "most vulnerable amongst refugees" (see the quote from Folkehelseinstituttet 2008:6. See Engebregsten 2002 for similar lines of reasoning with regard to unaccompanied minors in Norwegian policy). Thus, they are constructed as deserved receivers of support and care.

The children do not constitute a homogenous group. Each one of them has their own history and specific background. What they all share in common is that they are without the direct parental ... care, guidance and protection. They are in a foreign country with an unfamiliar language, unfamiliar traditions, food, etc. They often originate from countries with armed

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conflicts or other forms of organized violence, and to a varying degree they have experienced loss, bereavement, grief and other painful experiences.

(Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs 2009)

If in addition to a (pattern of) inadequate attachment one or more separations are added, the child endangers emotional quagmire. Children with this kinds of experiences risk different kinds of problems.

(SOU 2004: 74f)

Implicitly these constructions also highlight the distinctions between asylum-seeking children accompanied by parents and unaccompanied minors. Constructed as a child left to their own device because they are separated from their parents enhances the understanding of unaccompanied minors as in need of special attention and treatment. Inherent in this perception is also a conception of children as belonging to their biological parents (Cf. Tronson (2002) historical analysis of the concept of “parental custody” in law and policy). Being positioned close to a parent or caregiver is the child’s natural place (Cf. classical theories on parent-child attachments patterns, e.g., Chodorow 1978/1999, amongst others). According to this rationale the infant child experiencing separation from a parent (mother) is considered as suffering a developmental crisis, relieved only when unified with the same parent. As children grow and mature they will (and must) eventually tolerate being separated from their parents for a prolonged period of time. Cycles of separation versus unification are held as important when the child develops. Yet, if something happens that disrupt the normal sequence of separation and unification, children are often considered in risk of suffering, which might endanger their “natural” development (Cf. Malkki’s 1995, notion of the “natural order of things” in regards to citizens as belonging to a nation).⁶³ Prolonged separation from parents and being exposed to war and terror further enhances the vulnerability of the child. According to this rationale parents are consid-

63 These patterns of separation versus unification are often seen as “normal” when they do not prolong for to long periods of time when the child is small (for instance when a toddler attends daycare for a couple of hours because the parents needs to go back to work), but can be stretched as the child grows older. Paradoxically, prolonged separations are also seen as important in order to enhance the child’s independence from caregivers. This construction of “normal attachments patterns” becomes a spectre fluctuating between dependence, independence and interdependence. It can also be argued that what developmental psychologists construct as a “pattern of normal attachment” also mirrors and normalizes the everyday experiences of middle-class children growing up in any given (Western or Norwegian and Swedish) modern society, where parents work outside the home and individuality and autonomy is stressed. Experiences such as growing up with a close caregiver/parent working from abroad or contexts where children are brought up by external family are considered as rather anomalous and viewed as risks (see e.g., the discussion on “global care drain” in Hochschild and Ehrenreich 2002).

ered as safeguarding their children even in extreme situations, and those children who migrate with their parents are understood to be in a safer position. Such a view might imperil overconfidence in migrating parents' (or parents in marginalized positions) ability to protect their children from harm (Cf. Andersson 2010, Lundberg 2009 and Watters 2008) and might also lead to a potential bias where authorities are led to believe that children are always better off with their parents. According to Ayotte (2000) and Eide and Broch (2010), some of the world's unaccompanied children are also runaways from abusive families.

Inherent in the understanding of a child as a binary opposition to the adult is also that a child is a dependent receiver in need of support and care, while adulthood as such is constructed as a state of independency and that the adult subject should be the caregiver. The Swedish and Norwegian construction of the unaccompanied minor as a child without a parent shifts the focus from the experiences leading to a choice to migrate to the status of the unaccompanied minor being separated from the caregiver and the perceived state of loss and irreversible damage that this separation might cause (UDI 2000a, 2002a, 2007; Integrationsverket 2001; Swedish Migration Board 2010a).

Integral to a conception that constructs children as essentially different from adults is also ideas about childhood as a specific "space" in human life (Cf. Dencik and Schultz Jørgensen 1999). This construction of childhood is often made with reference to ideas of maturity and chronological age, playful activities and attending school. Situated within this construction is also an understanding of differences because of age working between or separating different groups of children. In this chapter, it is how age intersects with a concept of childhood that is the main focus and analytical target. Therefore, it goes without saying that dimensions such as class, gender, ethnicity, disabilities, and sexuality also separate and work to create differences between children and their experiences, as well as society's understanding of them.

5.1.1 Childhood and chronological age

In connection to the production of the unaccompanied minor as a vulnerable subject with specific entitlements, it becomes the duty of child-oriented countries such as Norway and Sweden to safeguard unaccompanied minors from the risks associated with trauma and separation.

In 1997, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said that unaccompanied minor refugees are the most vulnerable group, with the highest risk in terms of socio-cultural maladjustment and mental problems amongst all immigrants. In addition to the loss of or separation from

parents, siblings, relatives and friends, these children often originate from countries with war and conflict, and many have experienced or witnessed abuse and other traumatic events. (Folkehelseinstituttet 2008:6 *Når hverdagen normaliseres: psykisk helse og sosiale relasjoner blant enslige asylsøkere som kom til Norge uten foreldrene sine*. UNG-Kul rapport nr 1. 2008)

As I argue in the previous section, the construction of the unaccompanied minor as entitled to a specific reception and softer measures is based on the understanding that unaccompanied children are first and foremost children without adult caregivers. Their position as vulnerables is based on the assumption of what children need. However, given that there exists no essential distinction between what constitutes an adult versus a child in the Western world, ideas of chronological age are deemed as synonymous with the true age of a subject and are hence also considered as an important identity marker.

The immigration authorities, other public bodies and the child share the same interest in establishing the correct age of the child. The age of a child is significant both in terms of rights and duties in society.
(UDI 2004/2008a)

“Age is often equated solely (as) chronological age and stripped of its social meanings. This overlooks the fact that chronological age is itself socially constructed — employed primarily as a ‘marker’ of human development in societies ordered by chronological time” (Rose Clark-Kazak, 2008: 1309). The link between chronological age and ideas of maturity is made explicit in laws and practice, as specific ages correspond to gaining more autonomy. Seen in Swedish and Norwegian practice in how, for instance, turning 18 equals reaching the age of majority. Chronological age is also connected to specific duties and obligations: turning 15 equals being criminally responsible for your actions, or as in the case of the asylum-seeking child turning 14 equals being obliged to have your fingerprints taken (*daktning*) and being registered by the Eurodac system when applying for asylum (Cf. Dublin regulations/ Official Journal of the European Union (1997) and Swedish Migration Board⁶⁴ and UDI 2005/2008, 2004, 2004/2008a). Accordingly, chronological age is also connected to a withdrawal of rights: when the unaccompanied asylum-seeking minor turns 18 their benefits as a child are removed and they could be obliged to apply for asylum as an adult. When the

⁶⁴ <http://www.migrationsverket.se/Privatpersoner/Skydd-och-asyl-i-Sverige/Asylsokande-barn/For-barn/Med-foraldrar/Asylansokan/Fingeravtryck.html>.

unaccompanied minor was constructed as a specific subject with entitlements this was done with regard to an evaluation of children's entitlements because of their specific needs. However, when these extra benefits are taken away this is done merely in accordance to the chronological age of the subject.

Connections between age and obligations versus rights are clearly operating when it comes to the articulation of a coherent reception system directed at unaccompanied minors. Any person under 18 is in accordance with Swedish and Norwegian policy to be treated as a child (child-specific measures are taken, a guardian/custodian is appointed, and there are specific reception facilities, child-sensitive asylum process, etc.) Inherently there are ideas operating that work to stratify children. If childhood is a space that separates adults from children, there exists spaces within childhood that separate categories of children from one another. One could argue that notions of age equalize ideas of maturity to such an extent that chronological age becomes the demarcation line that divides the spaces or "stages" within childhood.⁶⁵

According to the Child Welfare Act § 5A-1 ("barnevernloven § 5A-1") Bufetat has the responsibility of providing all unaccompanied asylum seekers an offer to stay in a care center aimed at minors. This liability arises from the instance the unaccompanied minors are transferred from the immigration authorities. The provision applies to all children who are under 15 when their asylum application is submitted.

(Bufetat 2008/2009)

The concept of children is somewhat misleading in this context. This is usually about boys in their teens. (Eriksson 2010: 4) ... The term unaccompanied minors is used because it is concise and legally correct. I agree with many municipalities that it is important to clarify the age of the target group when planning the reception of them because the 16 to 17 year olds generally are in need of a different reception than little children.

(Ibid: 6)

Childhood is constructed as framing the process ranging from a subject in total dependency (infancy) to one characterized by more and more autonomy and independence. As indicated in the quote above, teenagers' competence, capability and needs position them as quite different subjects than small chil-

⁶⁵ Such a view of maturity as an ongoing process enclosed by fixed ideas of biological age could, for instance, be illustrated by how a child of a specific age is suddenly obliged to attend school. According to some theorists these stages work as transitions (rite de passage) marking the very end to a period of childhood (where the child has been engaging in free play) and indicating the beginning of the next "learning phase" of childhood (Johansson 2012).

dren.⁶⁶ According to this rationale (Cf. Erikssons quote above) to reach one's teens calls for a reception, different from the one considered appropriate for young children or toddlers. According to Eriksson (2010), the age composition of the unaccompanied minor is an important indicator of how a specific and appropriate reception system for unaccompanied minors should develop. In Norway, on the contrary, the division between children with regard to biological age are drawn even further: the demarcation line between different unaccompanied minors is made explicit, as children less than 15 years (in practice since 2007) are separated from those above 15. Those 14 and younger are the responsibility of the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat 2008/2009 a and b, 2010). The older ones (i.e., according to the official statistics also the majority of unaccompanied minors) are still in the care of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (Lidén 2013).

In the globalized society of today with high mobility and the dissemination of information, the growing gap between the wealthy nations and the poor countries of the world have become visible to an increasing number of people. While it has become easier to move, formal barriers that prevent people from moving freely have been raised and strengthened. It has become relatively few and small points of entrance/gates from the poor to the rich countries. Seeking asylum as an unaccompanied minor is such a gate. There are various reasons behind trying to get through this gate.

(Justis og politidepartement 2008: 5)

The singling out of the unaccompanied minor as a special group with specific entitlements because of their position as vulnerable children politicizes the issue of age in Norwegian and Swedish policy. Given a restrictive asylum system and an understanding of a lack of points of entrance between the richer and poorer parts of the world (see e.g., the quote above), couldn't applying for asylum claiming to be an unaccompanied minor work as a possible entry for adults hoping to make it to Norway or Sweden? Given the different receptions of vulnerable unaccompanied children versus adults, the focus on how to separate the small children from the older and the teenagers from those over 18 becomes a main target.

⁶⁶ Childhood versus adolescence and adulthood is also partly defined in relation to different bodily changes such as the reaching of maturity with regard to menarche and the growth of facial and pubic hair.

5.2 Age assessment in practice

In accordance with the principles stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child any individual under the age of 18 is to be considered a child and is hence entitled to a “softer” asylum scheme (Cf. Chapter 1). This is, for instance, brought forward with regard to how unaccompanied minors have the right to a child-friendly environment, a guardian/custodian (“God man”, *särskilt förordnad vårdnadshavare* in Swedish or *hjelpvege/verge* in Norwegian) and a quicker asylum procedure. As a rule of thumb unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children are normally not refused entry nor deported when and if their asylum claim is rejected in either Sweden or Norway. These softer measures are contrasted by what Brekke (2004) analyzes as a scheme of rather restrictive actions taken against adult asylum seekers (both singles and families) in order to symbolically and in practice deter people from applying for asylum in the first place (Cf. Watters 2007).

The intention to retain a restrictive asylum scheme can venture into a colliding course with the best interests of the child (Cf. Andersson et al 2010). In order to make these two rather irreconcilable aims smoothly cooperate, differentiating adults (i.e., asylum seekers over the age of 18) from children (i.e., any asylum seeking person under the age of 18) becomes important. This separation is interesting in accordance with what Engebretsen (2002, 2012), Watters (2008), Kohli (2007), Eide (2005), Eide et al. (2012), Hansen (2008), Schierup, Castles and Hansen (2006), and Fassin (2005; 2011) argue is illustrative of how European states and the EU focus on separating real victims from bogus asylum seekers, and how this debate also colors the public perception of migrants and asylum seekers. This moral economy also risks giving rise to the state of ambivalence that Bauman (1991) highlights, thus legitimizing even sterner and more uncompromising measures taken toward those claiming asylum in Norway and Sweden.

5.2.1 Norway — “When children apply for asylum they are safeguarded as children”

Between 2000-2010, an articulated toughening of practices of the reception of unaccompanied minors was evident, at least if one looked at the way unaccompanied minors were understood in Norwegian policy. What was expressed in the Norwegian context (especially by the UDI) was an apprehension to having a “soft asylum scheme”, which could make Norway a possible target country for a peaking number of asylum seekers (Cf. Hansen

2008 and Schierup, Castles and Hansen 2006 for similar reasoning). As stated earlier, unaccompanied children have access to a specific reception different from that available to adult asylum seekers. Given the Norwegian understanding of few existing points of entrance to the Western world (see e.g., the quote from the Justis og politidepartement/Justic and police department 2008: 5) and the implicit understanding of “hoards” of people eagerly in search of such doors, it is articulated as rather strategic to try to pass as a child in order to obtain a residence permit in Norway or the softer and child-friendlier asylum process.

In 2002, 894 reported to be unaccompanied minors arrived in Norway. This is a record both here and amongst the Nordic countries. The main reason is probably that, in contrast to Sweden and Denmark, Norway has not had a system of age determination in cases where there is doubt about (chronological) age. Sadly many claim an incorrect age because it is easier to obtain a residence permit as a minor. UDI has therefore introduced a new system for determining the age of asylum seekers from dental examinations and hand wrist X-rays. (UDI 2003 *Når barn søker asyl, blir de ivaretatt som barn*)

In recent years, the UDI noticed a remarkable increase in the number of adult asylum seekers who claim to be less than 18 years of age, hoping to be treated as minors. In February 2003, UDI therefore introduced a new system to assess age whenever there are doubts about the age of the applicant. (UDI 2004)

In the extract above, the UDI states that the reason Norway receives many (much more than Sweden and Denmark) asylum claims from underage asylum seekers is because the country does not have a system of age testing in cases where there could be reason to question if the age given by the asylum seeker is correct. A call for action and implementation of new age-testing measures was hence found legitimate. In comparison, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, outlining that “when children apply for asylum they are safeguarded as children”, similarly communicates that singling out illegitimates (i.e., those over 18 years of age) is done in such a way that it does not affect the proper care of the “real children”. Sometimes it is also implied that the separation of the real children from the bogus or adults pretending to be underage is done with the best interest of children. A system of age determination based on biometrical testing was hence implemented and came into

use in Norway in 2003. Through dental and skeletal X-rays the undisputable chronological age of the asylum seekers could be revealed.⁶⁷

Similar to the introduction of this novel practice in 2003 was also the decision to re-evaluate unaccompanied children's exception from Dublin dismissals and to limit the previous practice of granting unaccompanied minors above 16 years of age a permanent residence in Norway simply because next of kin could not be traced (see UDI's årsrapport 2009).

Unaccompanied minors have no longer a general exception from being returned to another Dublin country, and youngsters above 16, who received a residence permit only because caregivers cannot be found, get a temporary residence, which means they must return to their home country when they turn 18.

(UDI's årsrapport 2009b)

Expressed in the Norwegian national responses, and signaling politics, is the fear of being the one (Nordic or European) country left behind with what intrinsically is constructed as the possible burden of growing asylum migration. According to Brekke (2004), shifts in and a toughening of asylum poli-

⁶⁷ Cp. UDI (2003/2007) Hvordan er saksgangen i asylsaker? (www.udi.no)

UDI (2004) Omfattende alderstesting av enslige mindreårige asylsøkere. (www.udi.no)

UDI (2004/2008a) Retningslinjer for aldersundersøkelse av asylsøkere. RS 2004-028. Saksnummer: 04/9576

UDI (2004/2008b) Veiledning til individuell kartlegging og tiltaksplan for enslige mindreårige asylsøkere/flyktninger.

UDI (2005a) Familieinvandring for fosterbarn – krav til dokumentasjon – utlendingsforskriften 24 første ledd bokstav f. RS 2005-016. Saksnummer: 05/4782

UDI (2005b) Prosjekt for oppsporing og retur av enslige mindreårige asylsøkere. (www.UDI.no)

UDI (2005c) Utlendingsdirektoratets saksbehandlingsrutiner for enslige mindreårige asylsøkere og flyktninger. DM sak 050824-05 (Gjeldende fra September 2005)

UDI (2005/2008) Retningslinjer for arbeidet med enslige mindreårige asylsøkere i ankomstfasen. RS 2005-049. Saksnummer: 05/12490

UDI (2006/2008) Aldersundersøkelse. (www.udi.no)

UDI (2007a) Bruk av aldersundersøkelse i asylsaker. (www.udi.no)

UDI (2007b) UDI og mottakene har fokus på enslige mindreårige. (www.udi.no)

UDI (2008c) Ankomstfasen: Egenerklæring og asylintervju. (www.udi.no)

UDI (2008d) Tall og Fakta, (bokmål) (www.udi.no)

UDI (2009c) global statistikk enslige mindreårige asylsøkere og asylvedtak.

<http://www.udi.no/Global/upload/StatistikkNY/Asyl/Asylvedtak%20EMA%202009.htm>

cies are often legitimized by a fear of having the softest asylum scheme in a world of restrictive policies. Policy coordination is problematized as liable methods in order to more equally share the burden of asylum migration between Nordic or European countries. Malkki (1995) shows how refugees become constructed as a third world problem of peripheral character to Nordic and European countries. Parallel migration becomes constructed as something of external origin that through its potential consequences —people migrating and applying for asylum — consists as a latent social problem or “load” of external origin on the welfare state. Yet, asylum seekers are framed as possible strategic migrants actively seeking out the nation with the softest scheme (see e.g., Johansson 2005 for similar discussion), hence creating a system overload or a scenario of increasing migration influx. Considering this problematization it is justified to strengthen the control mechanisms or close the possible entrance points, in other words make it harder for an adult to pass as a child.

As a child the vulnerability of the asylum-seeking minor legitimizes soft measures, but as a potential strategic adult a call to regulate and control the same subject are deemed justified. Inherent within these ambivalent understandings and the actions that they make legitimate is the construction of unaccompanied minors in need of protection just because they are children.⁶⁸ One might even argue that in accordance with Norwegian practice the positioning of asylum-seeking children as objectified vulnerables disable them the possibility of being understood as political subjects that could otherwise be entitled asylum on the grounds of obtaining refugee status. Unaccompanied minors are similarly often not viewed as having legitimate asylum claims (see e.g., Engebretsen 2002; Eide 2005 and Eide and Broch 2010 for similar findings). When the UDI in the Norwegian quote above states that youngsters 16 years and older no longer can get residence “just because” their next of kin cannot be traced, it inherently also states that most youngsters had received their permanent residence for this very reason. Unaccompanied minors obtain their permanent residence permit for compassionate reasons and only because they were considered separated children and not because they are considered legitimate refugees according to the Geneva Convention (see e.g., Fassin 2005).

How teenagers are being deprived of the rights that are made accessible to unaccompanied children is important to analyze in the light of how vulnerability is constructed in Norwegian policy and practice: as a 16-year-old, the unaccompanied minor is not granted a permanent and indefinite residence,

⁶⁸ In other words “the construction of vulnerability” in O’Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007. Cf Best 1990, Christie 2001.

but is instead granted a temporary stay until 18 years of age (UDI 2009b). Another example is how the Norwegian social service from the 2007 was set in charge of the unaccompanied minors under the age of 15 , but not the youngsters above 15.⁶⁹

By highlighting the fact that the Norwegian asylum system safeguards and treats children as children, it is also implied that the possible others falsely claiming to be children are to be treated accordingly. What becomes evident within the field of Norwegian reception policies is that ideas about chronological age enclose and limit the rights to whom the underage asylum seeker has access. Maturity is constructed as a gradual process transforming the unaccompanied minor from their position as the legitimate dependent vulnerable toward independent adulthood. Teenagers become undecidable others or “double exposures” in this regard: clearly not adults, but maybe not really in essence constructed as vulnerable children.

Age assessments do not provide unambiguous results and should hence be used with caution. Results from the assessments are also seen in conjunction with other information concerning the probable age of the person. A person, who has stated to be 17 years of age and whose outcome of the assessment is “probably 20 years”, will most likely retain their stated age when a decision is made with regard to the asylum case. The case might have a different outcome if there is information about whether the applicant has applied for asylum in another country, or that there also exist travel documents.

(Justis og politidepartement 2008:11)

What also becomes clear in the Norwegian context is that the system of biometrical age testing is viewed ambivalently and much debated in research. The very same institutions that exercise these techniques also question their

⁶⁹ Cf. Barne- og familiedepartementet (2000) Håndbok om enslige asylsøkende flyktningbarn

Bufetat (2008/2009) Omsorgssentre for enslige mindreårige asylsøkere.

(www.bufetat.no Dokumentsti: Barnevern -> Enslige mindreårige asylsøkere -> Omsorgssenter)

Bufetat (2008/2009) Bosetting for barn under 15 år. (www.bufetat.no

Dokumentsti: Barnevern -> Enslige mindreårige asylsøkere -> Bosetting

Bufetat (2009) Enslige mindreårige asylsøkere under 15 år. (www.bufetat.no

Dokumentsti: Barnevern -> Enslige mindreårige asylsøkere -> Enslige mindreårige asylsøkere under 15 år)

Det kongelige barne- og likestillingsdepartementet; Ot.prp. nr. 28 (2007–2008) Om lov om endringer i lov 17 juli 1992 nr. 100 om barneverntjenester mv. (Omsorgen for enslige mindreårige asylsøkere inntil bosetting eller retur)

UDI (2008a) Stort behov for nye hjelpeverger. (www.udi.no)

UDI (2008b) Tilbud om mottaksplasser for enslige mindreårige. (www.udi.no)

accuracy as age determination tools. Age also appears dependent on more overall concerns and validations such as individual maturity or needs. Yet, since the division between those above 18 years of age (the real adults) and those below (what is put to the fore as the real unaccompanied minors) is rather difficult to draw, differentiations between children become imperative. In order to maintain a system of restrictive but also child-friendly policies, restrictiveness toward the “grey zone” subjects (such as teenagers) seems reasonable from an official standpoint. The implementation of age assessment tests illustrates what Miller and Rose (2008) argues constitute technological devices (technological governing) that bring the intentions formulated within the programs of governing into life. In order to separate children from adults, a cornerstone of the Norwegian governing of unaccompanied minors, techniques or methods must be adopted.

5.2.2 Sweden — “Children are to follow specific rules at the reception centers, because they are children”

The Swedish national action plans and/or policies on unaccompanied minors reflect many corresponding points of reference of the official Norwegian responses: children (subjects under 18 years of age) are singled out as specific and vulnerable subjects entitled to a more care-oriented reception system, and the separation of adult asylum seekers from unaccompanied children is considered of political importance. Interesting in this context, and in comparison with Norway, is that Sweden did not (new guidelines were to be launched from the National Board of Health and Welfare/”Socialstyrelsen” during 2013) implement a system of biometrical age testing equal to the Norwegian. Instead age assessment was a practice conducted in dialogue. Swedish Migration Board officers met the asylum-seeking child, collected documents, and gathered information from the legal guardian and social services officers, and sometimes even from teachers and home for care and housing (HVB) staff. It was during these conversations that age assessment was brought about (Swedish Migration Board 2006). Sometimes medical examinations (X-rays) were also conducted, but more as a complement in order to support or contest the result of the first age assessment. Age assessment in the Swedish context involves an apparatus of actors asked to judge the likelihood of age based on their evaluation of physical traits (e.g., facial hair) and behavior.

In a combination with other information, the (result) of the medical assessment (does not) rule out (the possibility) that the applicant may be assessed as an adult.
(Swedish Migration Board 2006a: 2.8. Bedömning efter medicinsk bedömning och konsekvenser av resultatet)

Though other opinions were accounted for, it was the duty of the Swedish Migration Board officer to make the final assessment. The results of this work were not considered a juridical decision and could hence not be appealed against. Age was considered something beyond being merely a biological trait. It is connected to maturity — similar to the Norwegian definitions — but also in accordance with an evaluation of individual needs and rights versus obligations (connected to chronological age) in Swedish society.

In addition, applicants are informed of what being registered as unaccompanied minors implies. ... The authority of the custodian in making decisions should be explained, in other words children's limited right to decide in questions on where to stay, economy, etc. The child must also follow specific rules in the group home because it is a child. (Swedish Migration Board 2006a)

A child as such is conceived as having limited self-sovereignty. The status of being an unaccompanied minor allows for a softer asylum scheme, but is also associated with specific limitations such as being dependent on a legal guardian to make decisions, placed in a foster home or a HVB facility, and complying with specific rules articulated by the caregivers in that home. Expressed in the Swedish Migration Board's extract above is also the importance of making the applicant fully appreciate the specific obligations or limits inherent in the status of being labeled an underage and unaccompanied asylum-seeker.

As demonstrated in the previous section, it is not possible to determine the absolute right age by conducting a medical assessment. Biological variability is significant and increases with age. When weighing in different findings (different tests/methods) the discrepancy between these can be substantial. The starting point should (always) be a comprehensive paediatric judgment.

(The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare /Socialstyrelsen 1993: 3)

According to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (1993) medical examinations as a base for age assessment are considered rather unreliable instruments. Biological variation is seen as increasing with age, hence making it more difficult to chronologically judge age by biologically

examining the child. As a child matures this evaluation becomes even more problematic (see e.g., Eide 2010 for similar discussion). A good assessment of age, according to the Swedish rationale, must hence be based on a more comprehensive medical evaluation. Age as such is not readable merely through the bones, teeth and other biological traits of any subject.

However, although Swedish authorities contest medical tests as a means to evaluate the age of unaccompanied minors, the dread of strategic adults trying to pass as unaccompanied children is also evident (Cf. Eriksson 2010).

Many testify that some of the children in the (municipal) reception are overage. There are no conclusive methods to determine the right age. A visual inspection can be done, but it is not clear who should do this and how cooperation (between different actors) should look like and whether it is reliable. The municipalities want the age assessment done before the children are re-placed in the municipality because of the difficulties of having overage children in the group homes. In our view, reliable age assessment would lead to more available placements (*platser*).

(Migrationsverket och SKL 2010)

In the quote above by the Swedish Migration Board and SKL (2010) it is clear that there is a problem with unaccompanied minor asylum seekers being overage (above 18 years of age and hence adults), and that it thus becomes important to construct evidence-based methods in order to age assess asylum-seeking children accurately. Alongside what are constructed as the “real children”, overage asylum seekers are challenging for the local municipalities who take care of unaccompanied minors. This could also be analyzed with reference to what Engebriksen (2002, 2012) and Meyer (2007) demonstrate as how adult practices have often been constructed as threatening or polluting vulnerable children. Children are to be protected from such practice by adults but coherently also shielded from dangerous adults. Within this conception “real children” are framed as vulnerable whilst adults passing as children are constructed as suspicious subjects posing as possible threats to the vulnerables (Cf. Best 1990). A relationship between adults passing as children and overcrowded facilities is also established in the quote above. The higher number of unaccompanied children applying for asylum in Sweden (equal to the Norwegian problematization) is highlighted as a consequence of calculating adults trying to pass as children and not necessarily a result of increased child migration. According to the Swedish rationale good methods for age determination are required, though the methods at hand — such as medical assessments and tooth and skeletal X-rays — are considered unreliable. Chronological age is also in the Swedish construction considered the correct

age of a given subject. The division between adults and children should coherently be based on more accurate measures or tools to assess chronological age, thus implying a need for new techniques and novel measures in order to more accurately enable the separation of different categories of asylum seekers. The importance of separating the deserved vulnerables from the undeserved or bogus are also evident in the Swedish problematization.

5.3 Contextualized maturity — contextualized vulnerability

Although age is considered as indisputably connected to rights and obligations, some of the distinctions made between youngsters, children and adults are seemingly also constructed differently depending on the contexts in Sweden and Norway. Chronological age as such can hence give diverse implications depending on whether or not the subject is positioned in the asylum process versus the integration space.

When applying for asylum in either Norway and Sweden, and during the asylum procedure, the 18-years division is constructed as a fixed entity that rigidly divides the possible (strategic) adults from (vulnerable) unaccompanied children. If the unaccompanied minor turns 18 years of age before the final asylum decision the unaccompanied minor suddenly becomes treated as an adult. They are then transferred to adult facilities and suddenly excluded from those extra benefits earmarked unaccompanied minors. For example, when the asylum-seeking child turns 18 the trusteeship of the custodian/guardian ends.⁷⁰ Rejected minors might even become deported adults, as the dismissals can then be executed by Norwegian and Swedish border police. The division seems watertight, as the asylum seeker is either under the

⁷⁰ See e.g., UDI 2003/2005, Enslige mindreårige asylsøkere som blir 18 år før vedtaket er fattet i asylsaken - u/ § 21 annet ledd, jf ul § 8 annet ledd Migrationsverket 2006 Utlänningshandboken -37.3 Åldersbedømming. 2006-02-

28/2007-01-22

Migrationsverket Socialstyrelsen och SKL (2009) Ett gemensamt ansvar för ensamkommande barn och ungdomar, (www.migrationsverket.se)

Migrationsverket 2009a verksamhets och kostsamarhetsprognos 2009

Migrationsverket 2009b, Aktuellt om barn och unga, (www.migrationsverket.se)

Migrationsverket (2009c) AKTUELLT OM Ensamkommande barn och ungdomar.

Juni, juli, augusti 2009

Migrationsverket 2010, Avgjorda asylärenden innevarande år,

(www.migrationsverket.se)

age of 18 and hence a child or, when they reach the age of adulthood, treated as an adult.⁷¹

The 18-year-old is, according to the construction of the adult as a binary opposition to the child, intrinsically understood as capable of taking care of themselves and of making balanced and rational choices (Cf. Swedish Migration Board 2001:3). Yet, if the unaccompanied asylum-seeking child or youngster gets a permanent residence permit in either Norway and Sweden the razor sharp division between those above and below 18 years of age becomes more blurred and fluctuant:

Because many children and youngsters who arrive in Sweden are aged 16 to 18 years of age, several municipalities believe that support, health and social care needs to persist for some time also in adulthood/after 18 years of age. After the child turns 18, the municipalities may not be reimbursed (by the State) for their expenses (*ersättningsförrordningen*). According to Swedish legislation parents are given the obligation to support their children up to age 20 if the child is still enrolled in secondary education.

(Swedish Board of Integration/Integrationsverket 2001: 6)

In addition, the Ministry will revise the circular that regulates the aftercare of children in childcare, and add the recommendation that young people who have refused aftercare should be contacted when they turn 19 years old in order to check if they would consider support. These changes are a step in the right direction in order to ensure that older youngsters get the support they might need while moving into independent adulthood. (Folkehälsainsitutttet/IMDI/Oppedal et al. 2009:14)

When moved from the asylum process space to the integration process space, the unaccompanied minor is not always considered as automatically becoming the capable and self-catering adult when turning 18. In practice the local municipal social service, in Norway and Sweden, can then re-conceptualize the young adult as a subject in need of prolonged care and support until the age of 21. Suddenly the 18-years boundary between the vulnerable child and adult is not that fixed. The group of people in the age span between 18-21 can also be re-constructed as young adults, older youth or sometimes even as vulnerable adults by the Swedish and Norwegian authorities. Young adults are considered in need of supervision, guidance and prolonged care, and therefore not to be let on their own. The constructions of

⁷¹ In the Norwegian context the transference from the minor to the adult category is also automatically the case when the unaccompanied minor is estimated as older than 21 years of age due to the result of the medical age examination.

vulnerability versus maturity in relation to chronological age are also contextualized concepts.

5.4. An ambivalent victim?

Imbedded within the visualization of the unaccompanied minor in Norwegian and Swedish official speech is an construction of the child subject as binarily opposing the construction of the adult. As a child the asylum seeker is put to the fore as a vulnerable and dependent object in need of care and protection (see e.g., Best 1990; Jenks 1996). This articulation is connected to an understanding of children as vulnerables. As a child left to their own devices, without the protection of an adult caregiver, the vulnerability is further enhanced. Because of the position as a subject as: 1) in search of refuge or protection; 2) a child; and 3) without caregivers, Norway and Sweden have developed a specific reception that aims to safeguard the interests and needs of unaccompanied minors. Essential to this construction is not the possible incidences that might have led the individual child to migrate in the first place, but the separation from parents and close relatives and the possible damage that this separation might cause the unaccompanied asylum-seeking child. A connection between childhood and child is also made clear, and children are put to the fore as childhood rights holders. Factors considered damaging to the child are often said to be the very end to childhood (Cf Engebriqsten 2002, 2012).

Inherent understandings of childhood as a space to be kept separate from adults and from adult activities are also operating. The Norwegian and Swedish conceptualizations of adulthood versus childhood interconnect maturity and chronological age. Maturity, constructed as a gradual process, becomes in some sense connected to the ability of the individual to act rationally, calculate risks and make strategic choices, ultimately becoming independent. This also constructs the vulnerability of a child as a concept with gradations, from the total vulnerability and dependence of the small baby to the independency and autonomy of the adult. As a teenager the asylum seeker is seen as belonging to a fluid space between childhood and adulthood. This positions them as a somewhat rather ambivalent and undecidable other. The teenager becomes a subject considered more mature and more competent than the child, yet still not as advanced as the adult. Legitimized in Swedish and Norwegian practice are hence the need to formulate a reception system that enables Sweden and Norway to distinguish children from teenagers and adults in practice. This is brought forward in the Norwegian (but also in the

Swedish) context by making divisions between different age categories of children, and by connecting different rights to the chronological age of the subject. Within Norwegian policy there is the need to distinguish youngsters from children deemed necessary, therefore making only the group of unaccompanied children less than 15 years old the responsibility of the Bufetat during their asylum process. In Sweden, all minors less than 18 are considered children, hence making them the responsibility of the municipal social services from day one.

Underlying the different perceptions of age and vulnerability there is also an undertone of disbelief. According to the Geneva conventions on human rights a refugee is someone who has a fear of prosecution because of religious beliefs, political activities and/or their sexual orientation. A refugee is hence also inherently defined as a political subject (see e.g., Squire 2009). Constructed as a vulnerable subject and a deserving victim because of parental separation shifts focus from a space where the unaccompanied child could be viewed as an active subject to a space where they instead become a passive object belonging or dependent on their parents. The unaccompanied minor is constructed as in essence not really a real refugee, as Norwegian and Swedish authorities state that very few of the unaccompanied minors have such well-founded asylum claims as defined in the convention (Cf. Engbrigsten 2002; Lundberg 2009). Instead, unaccompanied minors and children are given the right to reside in Sweden and Norway due to more overall humanitarian considerations and for compassionate reasons, such as the fact that their next of kin cannot be traced and of their vulnerability as children. The unaccompanied minor's right to reside is thus dependent on the understanding of what constitutes their specific state of vulnerability, for example being passive, objectified, and exposed because of parental separation.

According to both the Norwegian and the Swedish understanding, age is a central part of identity, but also an important personality trait that somehow comes to reveal whether the asylum seeker is a possible strategic adult amid the vulnerable child. If the asylum seeker is judged to be overage they lose access to the extra benefits for minors and are lifted from the category and statistics and registers of unaccompanied children. Trying to pass as a child has rather fatal consequences: caught lying or somehow misleading the authorities with regard to child status can weigh in negatively when judging the overall asylum claims. According to this rationale and if you are caught lying about your identity, it might be considered possible that you could be mendacious about other things as well (Cf. UDI 2004/2008).

Age in the Norwegian understanding is also constructed as a biological fact. The body is accentuated as an instrument that can reveal the truth about

chronological age, better or more correctly than the asylum seeker. According to the UDI (2004/2008), the results of biological age assessment are to be interpreted as more reliable than the narratives given by the asylum seeker. Fassin (2005) notes that there has been a change from a focus on refugee status to one where more and more asylum seekers are granted a stay (permanent or temporary) on humanitarian grounds. Within this change of conduct is biopolitics, where the body is valued as a truth-revealing device. Part of this shift is how the asylum seekers' narratives (such as the claim of being under 18 years of age) are considered more or less uncertain instruments, as they could be lying (Cf. Finch 2005, "The climate of mistrust"). The other part of this shift is interestingly how bodies are viewed as able to verify the truth, in either, as in Fassin's case (2005), incurable diseases or the indisputable status of being a minor or an adult, as in the case of the unaccompanied minors in Norway. The need for more evidence-based measures and better age determination are also expressed in the Swedish context, thus calling for more control and monitoring in the governing of the asylum-seeking subject.

In Norwegian and Swedish policy the understanding of chronological age as constituting a clear-cut division between the child and adult is also a contextualized entity in practice. The implications of reaching maturity or 18 years of age is highly dependent on the context of either still being in the asylum process or in the process of integration. Depending on the contextualization the 18-year-old can either be viewed as a possible and ambivalent (strategic) adult and yet as a young and hence vulnerable adult in need of extra supervision, care and support.

Unaccompanied minors are framed as care-related social problems by Swedish and Norwegian authorities (Cf. Eide 2005), yet at the same time official problematizations also come to legitimize different control and sanction strategies. Framed as a third world issue, migration is considered an external problem or a security issue, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, ultimately legitimizing restrictive practices in order for the Norwegian and Swedish governments to protect its borders and territories. As a child the asylum seeker is constructed as vulnerable, dependent and in need of care and protection. As an adult considered as an independent agent, capable of autonomy and strategic thinking, and excluded from the extra benefits and support directed at unaccompanied children. As a teenager the asylum seeker is constructed as a subject belonging to the fluid space between the child and adult worlds. The teenager becomes an ambivalent and undecidable other, considered more mature and more competent than the child, yet not as advanced as the adult.

6

Caregivers talk about unaccompanied minors

In this chapter, I analyze how a selection of 80 caregivers, (i.e., officials and support staff) talk about unaccompanied minors and their work with them. The Swedish municipal reception system aims to provide unaccompanied children and youngsters with, for example, good developmental opportunities, schooling, suitable housing and care, and comprises a variety of different institutions and public bodies. Each one of these plays an important part in the everyday life of unaccompanied minors but also in the governing of them in practice.

My main objective in Chapter 6 is to study the different narratives and conceptualizations that are put to the fore by a selection of social workers, teachers, healthcare professionals, home for care and housing (HVB) staff, foster parents, and custodians when they make sense of unaccompanied children and youngsters. My aim is to analyze how the officials and support staff come to single out and construct them as specific subjects of knowledge.

In the first part of Chapter 6 (section 6.1), I examine how officials and support staff sometimes emphasized unaccompanied minors as positive exceptions to other problematic categories. In section 6.2, I demonstrate that officials and support staff simultaneously in different ways also refer to them as vulnerable children, yet as will be presented in the last part of section 6.3, they could furthermore be accentuated as youngsters with specific shortcomings. These rather ambiguous and ambivalent problematizations work to legitimize specific action with regard to unaccompanied children, a topic I analyze in Chapter 7.

When talking about their chores or tasks it is clear that the diverse actors involved in the reception of unaccompanied minors in the Gothenburg Region Association of local Authorities (GR) sometimes narrate their work differently and in accordance with their overall responsibilities. For example, while social workers present themselves as important problem solvers aiming to assist and support in daily life, custodians/guardians work as important

control mechanisms (or protectors/mediators) amid different authorities such as social services or the Swedish Migration Board's officers. HVB staff and foster parents definitively talk about how they make everyday life possible for children and youngsters (such as driving them to leisure time activities, doing homework, taking out money from the ATM, teaching them how to ride a bike/swim). Teachers and pedagogues, on the other hand, talk of their "assignment" with regard to unaccompanied minors as being important promoters of learning, while healthcare workers talk about how they facilitate and support their mental and physical well-being and concurrently work to encourage feelings of trust and fate in them again (Cf. Stretmo and Melander 2013).

Evident in the manner in which the different actors narrate their tasks and duties are also ideas of what constitute the category of unaccompanied minors, their needs and requirements. In this chapter, I analyze some of the conceptualizations and problematizations highlighted by people active in their reception. Although some of these constructs relate to the specific context in which officials and support staff work, others were narrated in a similar fashion independent of what role the interviewee had with regard to unaccompanied children and youngsters. These shared conceptualizations were unaccompanied minors as: positive exceptions; vulnerable children; and children and youngsters with specific shortcomings.

6.1 Unaccompanied minors as (respectable) exceptions

When asked to give an overall view of what working with unaccompanied children implies, various officials and support staff interviewed often made implicit or explicit reference to other children. Unaccompanied minors sometimes were made equal to or contrasted to newly arrived migrant children or children of migrant backgrounds, yet at other times they were compared to Swedish-born kids.

Occasionally, however, they were also articulated as positive exceptions. In this section, I examine how unaccompanied minors are narrated when framed as respectable exceptions from problem groups.

GUDRUN: For the most part, it works, and I must say that overall unaccompanied minors are very easy to handle kids.

(Group interview with social workers in an urban municipality 120109 page 9)

In Gudrun's (a social worker) understanding, her conduct and focus (in investigating and conducting follow-ups) is highlighted much more straightforward in comparison to the management of other categories of children and youngsters, as she says that unaccompanied minors are especially "easy" or manageable kids.

6.1.1 Different from problematic youngsters

When unaccompanied children and youngsters are constructed as easy to manage according to, for instance, Gudrun's rationale above, one wonders whether she indirectly also implies that doing social work normally or otherwise implies working with other categories of children. According to Johansson and Johansson (2012), Swedish or Swedish-born children in social care are often positioned by the social service as "problematic youth" from "problem families". In Gudrun's quote unaccompanied minors could be analyzed as different from what she intrinsically constructs as Swedish-born problem youth.

STEFAN: The statistics are absolutely amazing: I've had only one youth who has had serious (inaudible) criminal, non-diagnosed abusers. And then I speak about some hundreds of young people and everyone who has arrived during three and a half years ... (from) the end of 2006 up until the present day, it is only one that's been sentenced, not one single drug abuser.

HELENA: So this is a golden resource, given the (need) Europe has for labor.

STEFAN: Five years, I realize now, five years of receiving youngsters, one criminal, (and) no substance abusers.

(Group interview with social workers in suburban municipality 111012 page 28)

Within the social workers' dialogue above, unaccompanied minors seem to be indirectly matched to children and youngsters in social care. In comparison, unaccompanied minors are constructed as adaptable and non-problematic ("it is only one that's been sentenced", "not one single drug abuser"). They are even accentuated as possible economic assets ("a golden resource") in a Europe suffering from an impending labor shortage. The construction of unaccompanied minors in opposition to the children social workers usually come in contact with is also evident in, for instance, the way Stefan (in the quote above) highlights how unaccompanied minors hardly ever come in contact with criminality or substance abuse or reveal signs of deviant behavior. By referring to statistics, Stefan makes a strong claim for generalizability ("I speak about some hundreds of young people"), implying

that law-abiding behavior is rather typical of unaccompanied minors. Concurrently though in how Stefan phrases his claim –or the way in which he talks– becoming a substance abuser or committing crimes are otherwise what he implicitly seem to expect from youngsters in similar situations (or the very reason why the social service have come in contact with these kids). Unaccompanied minors are hence constructed as good and respectable exceptions from what is implied as otherwise a rather problematic category.

Another reading of Stefan’s quote might also imply that he has been expecting problematic behavior from the group of unaccompanied minors. Helena’s accentuation of them as a golden resource is hence interesting in light of the problematizations emphasized in public and official narrations, where they are highlighted as at-risk children.

MARTA: But we have one thing we have not mentioned and that's how fine the students (in the introductory class) are, and the kitchen (*bamba*) staff say that they are great your students. They say thanks for their food and they are well-mannered and they are very polite, which you can see wherever they are: helpful, friendly, and they do not spit on the floor and swear and behave like many other Swedish students do. But they receive very good testimonials from others in the school.

(Group interview with teachers at a secondary school in suburban municipality 111118 page 19)

Similar understandings are also brought forward in the way Marta (a teacher) explains what she thinks is typical of the children attending her introductory class. For her unaccompanied minors are blended in with all of the other students in her introductory unit, hence becoming synonymous with newly arrived children and young people in general. Comparable to the narrations made by the social workers Gudrun, Stefan and Helena, these fine students (i.e., newly arrived children) are framed as polite, well-mannered and respectful counterparts to their Swedish peers, who evidently spit on the floor and behave rather badly.

Coexisting with these positive constructions are also other and similar narratives. Kristina (a foster parent), for instance, gave the following reply when asked to talk about her experiences of having an unaccompanied Afghan foster son in her house:

KRISTINA: I sense that it is very much this image, when I say that we have an Afghan boy in our home, then people tend to get a little scared and say, “Oh well then is he weird?” And he eats weird food and he prays five times a day, thus there could be a lot of problems. That he is a Muslim and that he furthermore also is Afghan, it’s even worse: “He will not become

a bomb person when he grows up?” There are so much negativity. And it is not strange that you would think that; I can imagine it myself when I go through (City Mall) and see these wild kids who come from (Concrete Suburban Area), boys with Achmed’s appearance and size, who just run around, head to the city and steal. This is the image that many have. They do not have that image like we have, which I think really is the commonplace one, of a regular person and ordinary guy who needs support and who is not at all difficult to handle or hard to take care of.

(Group interview with foster parents 110628 page 16)

According to Kristina’s narrative there is an understanding amongst people that come to frame Afghan youngsters as potential menaces. Achmed’s (the foster son) position as Muslim and Afghan makes him a possible “bomb person” in others’ view. For Kristina it is Achmed’s resemblance to this dubious category that makes him guilty by association. For her Achmed is different, both with regard to his lack of Swedishness (his practices and looks) but also the category she conceptualizes as the “wild kids” from one of Gothenburg’s suburbs, or the concept of the “Afghan”.

The normality that is underlined in Kristina’s quote is inherently associated to a “Swedish way of life”, characterized by an absence of the “strange foods” Achmed eats and of his other Islamic practice, hence excluding him from it. Achmed’s apparent or surface otherness makes other people see him as potentially dangerous. Kristina’s concept of normality still includes him, as at the same time Achmed is also highlighted as “regular person and ordinary guy”. It is Achmed’s otherness on the inside that is constructed as distinguishing him from the problematic category of the wild kids. By drawing on her own experience, Kristina makes a claim of generalizability with regard to her evaluation of Achmed: “They do not have that image like we have, which I think really is the commonplace one”.

Unaccompanied minors, such as Achmed in Kristina’s narration, should be seen as easy going kids that are not essentially hard to handle. Furthermore, these ordinary guys are constructed as possible exceptions to be distinguished from other more problematic youngsters and kids. Accentuated in Kristina’s quote is Achmed’s (and also maybe other unaccompanied minors or Afghan youngsters like him) difference from what is conceptualized as problematic wild kids (Afghan looking, boys, of same size, living in the suburbs, “weird Muslim practices”, running around, stealing, etc.).

In Gudrun, Stefan, Helena, and Marta’s constructions it is the adaptability, compliance and respectability of some unaccompanied minors (individuals or as a group) that are highlighted, expressed as, for example, politeness and respectful behavior in the case of Marta, or as a golden resource and law-

abiding or decent young people in Stefan and Helena's narration. Theirs and Kristina's different angles of incidence could hence be analyzed as possibly re-positioning unaccompanied minors from a point of view where groups of different welfare recipients on the one hand and/or groups of migrants on the other hand are debated as possibly costly burdens to society. When unaccompanied minors as a group are re-articulated as potential economic assets or as normal kids with rather normal needs, this could be analyzed as having an explicit or implicit reference to such a discussion. With regard to the narrations made here, unaccompanied minors are sometimes put forward as positive exceptions from other categories of children and youngsters. Such distinctions are more clearly part of what Thombsen (1971), Fassin (2005, 2011) and Watters (2007) label a moral economy, where distinctions are drawn amid more or less deserving receivers of help, social recognition and support.

6.1.2 Determined kids — exceptions amongst unaccompanied minors

The distinctions made by officials and support staff also work to single out or stress differences between groups of unaccompanied minors.

KARIN: I've got one such typical boy from Afghanistan who ran away from there when he was 15 just because he wanted to get an education in Iran and then realized, "I wont get an education there either, so I go to Sweden instead". Extremely determined. Been one year in school, managed to learn how to read and write all by himself ... he's 17 now and he will enroll in upper secondary education next year. Really unbelievable.

(Group interview with upper secondary school teachers in an urban municipality 120221 page 14)

According to Karin (a teacher), some youngsters, like her Afghan student, should be considered typical (of unaccompanied minors in general or of Afghan youngsters or boys?) and as "extremely determined" kids. In her narration being determined implies taking control over one's situation, and use migration as a means to personal fulfilment and success against rather tough odds. Her construct is interesting to review with reference to the Norwegian and Swedish officials' ideas of strategic migration that I examine in Chapters 4 and 5. In comparison to the Norwegian and Swedish official images of strategic migration and/or migrants, motivation driven migration was synonymous with economic migration, hence framed or problematized as dubious within the asylum system. For Karin migration is to some extent identified as

strategically motivated, but the migrant is concurrently also put to the fore as a survivor of harsh circumstances. In her framing these two dimensions can coexist in a way that was rarely implied in the official narrations, where motivation was constructed as a binary opposition; being a real or genuine (and hence passive and vulnerable) unaccompanied victim.

EMMA: I've had one unaccompanied boy, a real survivor who made his way and managed to get his grades in Swedish, Maths, English, even though he had never gone to school before, regular school. He had another kind though, other people who had taught him ...

LIVE: Homeschooling?

EMMA: Yes, a really street smart boy who managed to get that and got himself enrolled in Folk High School, and who now continues to go to Folk High School. No one knows how far he will go.

LOUISA: Yes a really good guy, totally awesome.

EMMA: But he is a boundary tester. He will be able to do everything, but only if they don't end up on the wrong side of the law.

(Group interview with upper secondary school teachers from in a rural municipality 111124 page 11)

The dialogue above points to a similar narration to Karin's: the unaccompanied minor is described as a "real survivor" and concurrently a "street smart boy". In section 6.3.3, I discuss the implicit understanding of unaccompanied minors as first and foremost boys or young men. Still, there is also some ambivalence as to how she positions this boy, as he (or unaccompanied minors as a group) is also what Emma articulates as a "boundary tester". As street smart the unaccompanied minor is also an ambiguous subject, as he could risk ending up on the wrong side of the law. There is also an interesting shift to multiple form use, from "he" to "they", implying that she specifically highlights the boy in question, but could also be generalizing the group of extraordinary unaccompanied minors. This construction also links to the classical framing of youngsters (Dionysian children or teenagers) as limit testing, impulsive and unpredictable, and in need of some parental guidance and discipline (Cf. Jenks 1996).

BOGDAN: It certainly takes less time for some. It depends on how forward-oriented (*framåtriktade*, sic.) they are. If they are shy, it takes them longer. If they are more forward-oriented, it is quicker. Some have made friends really easily: "I suddenly made two, three new friends when I went to the city", but for others it can take quite a long time.

(Group interview with HVB staff 110914 page 13)

Highlighted in Bogdan's narration it is rather the distinction between the forward-oriented ("dedicated" and/or "outgoing") versus "shy" youngsters ("I suddenly made two, three new friends") that is stressed. The ability for some unaccompanied minors to socialize and make friends is constructed as a fixed personality trait, thus making it easier ("quicker") for them to adapt to a new milieu. There are some similarities in the way Karin's determined boy, Emma's survivor and street-smart minor or Bogdan's "forward-oriented" youngster are positioned: they are singled out as individuals amongst the group that are stories of success or as extraordinary exceptions. In Bogdan's quote dedication and/or outgoing nature in unaccompanied minors seems to be constructed as a much more common feature or individual trait, in comparison to determination or a survivor instinct in Karin and Emma's quotes. What all three of the above narrations have in common is how unaccompanied minors are constructed as active agents: "managed to learn how to read and write all by himself"; "managed to get his grades in Swedish, Maths, English"; and "some have made friends really easy". The accomplishments of these determined and dedicated youngsters, whether it is the ability to make friends or succeed in school, are narrated as a result of their own personal, individual dedication and/or inner drive. Evident in the extracts is also how structural factors are rendered invisible when the achievements of the determined and "forward-oriented" youngsters are singled out as *wonderful exceptions* yet also as *individual* achievements.

6.1.3 Mature, precocious and independent youngsters

When unaccompanied minors were accentuated as positive exceptions they were also sometimes underlined as more mature and independent compared to Swedish-born children.

MELINA: It may become a frustration as many may have taken care of their family in their home country, and then they come here and become treated like children, it can be really tough.

NAMIR: I was just thinking, but I didn't say it, but it's challenging too. One must not treat them equal to a Swedish 17-year-old because they are different, but at the same time you can be 15 and have been working for two years. It is difficult for almost everyone; society treats them like 15 years or younger ... maybe they are really 12 years and he worked in industry, and so they ... have more experience in life. ... His mom is waiting for his weekly allowance from him so it's hard.

(Group interview with HVB staff 110615 page 21)

In the extract above, Melina and Namir (HVB staff members) connect their construction of unaccompanied minors as exceptions to a construction where they are positioned as more mature than Swedish children of the same age due to having different experiences. The minors are put to the fore as having been working before coming to Sweden or having in fact been helping their families for years. Maturity in Namir and Melina's construction is connected to specific activities and not necessarily to age. The children are constructed as breadwinners, hence making them different or older than other 15 or 17 year olds. The images of unaccompanied minors as mature or even precocious connects to common Western ideas of childhood as a space associated with specific activities while disassociated from others.⁷² The very discourse on children is inherently connected to narratives of playful activities or learning and schooling and dependency. In the Namir's quote the unaccompanied minor is distinguished from the Swedish teenager due to having had a work trajectory and for being expected to contribute economically to his family.⁷³ According to Melina, it is henceforth difficult for unaccompanied minors to be treated as children due to their perceived adult positioning. In other words doing adult activities and being independent back home, signifies being positioned a little bit outside of childhood in Sweden.

In Melina's and Namir's positioning unaccompanied minors are constructed as dissimilar to Swedish children and youngsters, which in turn comes to legitimize that different actions or conduct are taken in their regard. In the following section, I will look into some other and sometimes opposing narratives that might shed further light on what the stories of success or unaccompanied minors as positive exceptions might refer to.

6. 2 Unaccompanied minors as vulnerable children

When officials and support staff are asked to talk about what they find challenging in their work with unaccompanied children and youngsters, one of the central features that they often underline is psychological risk, as well as physical distress and illness.

⁷² As Meyer (2007) and Engebretsen (2002, 2012) note, children or childhood are often accentuated as a space and a position estranged from adulthood and adult activities. Children are also constructed as passive objects to be catered to by parents (and not the other way around).

⁷³ Evident in many quotes is the understanding of unaccompanied children as boys. In section 7.3.3 of this chapter, I further examine how ideas or notions of gender intersect in narratives on unaccompanied minors.

Rather wide and holistic concepts of health and well-being were often brought forward in the interviews with officials and support staff: on the one hand, well-being was understood as a state of equilibrium, and on the other hand health was seen as a dynamic, ranging between the two opposites illness and feeling good (Cf. Eastmond 2010 for a similar definition). Health as such was articulated as corresponding to physiological as well as psychological factors, but also understood as related to social and environmental dimensions.

NATALIE: Many of these students are carrying a lot of psychosomatics with them. They have a lot of symptoms: insomnia, headache, stomach aches, which then also suggest that they've got a real health issue.

(Group interview with secondary school health team in Gothenburg 111111 page 3)

Evident in many interviews is the fact that physical symptoms were constructed as expressions or evidence of underlying mental illness. According to Natalie's (a school nurse) above quote, "carrying a lot of psychosomatics" is conceptualized as a "real health issue", and such a bad state of mind and body is concurrently constructed as quite common amongst many of the unaccompanied children and youngsters.

Similar to Norwegian and Swedish official problematizations that I analyze in Chapter 4, associations were made between an endangered well-being and the specific situation that unaccompanied minors find themselves in. Similar understandings are also emphasized in many different studies on unaccompanied minors (Cf. Stretmo 2010; Eide and Broch 2010; Wernesjö 2011; Derluyn et al 2008; Folkehelseinsittet/Oppedal et al. 2008; Eide and Broch 2010: 50; Brunnberg et al. 2011; Bengtsson and Ruud 2012).

Kohli (2007) among others (e.g., Kohli and Mitchell 2007; Watters 2008; Bengtson and Ruud 2012; Wernesjö 2014) notes that such an angle of incidence risks rendering unaccompanied children and youngsters as the carriers and/or sufferers of specific trauma (Cf. Stretmo 2010, for a discussion on how the separation from parents is accentuated as "the worst trauma" with regard to unaccompanied children in Norwegian and Swedish policy).

6.2.1 Traumatized sufferers or problematics in a state of emergency

During the conversations with teachers, pedagogues, custodians, and healthcare practitioners, the topic of unaccompanied minors' bad health or illness was something they often returned to during the interview. As one

could expect, talking about unaccompanied minors from a health point of view was very evident in the discussions with the healthcare practitioners, but questions of ill health and well-being were also evident and much debated in narratives told by custodians, teachers, social workers, housing staff, and foster parents. Many of the teachers, for instance, often pondered whether or not a good learning situation could ever occur for their unaccompanied students given the fact that they find themselves in a difficult situation with a high risk of anxiety and stress. In the following extract, we look at a quote from teacher Emma, who in the previous section talked about the unaccompanied survivor as a positive exception to other newly arrived children and youngsters, and how she concurrently also positions unaccompanied minors with regard to their mental health status:

EMMA: You cannot take in (“learning”) if you do not have peace and quiet, I mean safety and security and everything. ... Presently we have an unusually good situation: we have an unusually large number of (students with) residence permits. We do not really have any that are acting out, but we've had times when we've had psychotic students, when we have had students who have just broken down. We have had countless fights where you must concentrate on retaining as much peace and quiet in the group as possible. Right now we are in a different position and it feels tremendously wonderful. All the newly arrived (students) come to our group, as I said there are many that are completely traumatized, some have already been a turn in a correction institution and so on. So right now we have a better situation than ever before. We have never had more than half of the class with a residence permit so it's been turbulent years.

(Group interview with upper secondary school teachers from an in an rural municipality 111124 page 3)

According to Emma, learning is facilitated by “peace and quiet” in the classroom, but also slowed down or hindered by youngsters in a bad mental state who act out. In her quote “safety” and “security” are forwarded as necessary settings in order to educate children and youngsters, and conditions she must struggle to maintain as the teacher. The situation in her group of preparatory students is constructed as quite the opposite to a tranquil atmosphere. With “psychotic students”, “children who have just broken down” and “countless fights” between peers it is evidently challenging to uphold the essential peace and quiet in the classroom. Compared to previous years where most of the students had their asylum claims rejected, the here and now is highlighted as a relieving exception (this is, for instance, accentuated by how the word “unusually” is repeated when the present is described), as the majority of students obtained permanent residence permits. What Emma articu-

lates as being in an asylum process or risking rejection becomes specific situational factors — “turbulent years” — that threaten the well-being of newly arrived youngsters. Concurrently those she talks about are themselves also singled out as possible risks, menaces or “completely traumatized” (“some have already been a turn in a correction institution”). They are hence narrated as a group of fragile yet also potentially aggressive and erratic individuals hard to work with.

PÄR: The children are in a crisis when they arrive. We have to realize that. It’s horrible to watch and horrible to be around when it is like that. Had a boy who took matters into his own hands and ran. Have another who is in such a bad state medically that we can’t send him home. I feel powerless, I do.

(Group interview with HVB staff 110615 page 13)

Pär (a HVB staff member) narrates a story similar to Emma’s. In his understanding the “crisis” that the unaccompanied children find themselves in is connected to the uncertainty of living in an asylum process, risking having your asylum claim rejected or being deported to the country of origin. The gravity of this situation is amplified by how one kid is said to be in such a “bad state medically that we can’t send him home”, but also in relation to how another is described as having decided to take “matters into his own hand and ran”.

STINA: They were probably overage, they came as 15 year olds, but we did not perceive them as two 15 year olds. And they had problems, especially one of them, which meant that we decided that they were in need of more support than we could offer them in this group home ... There were incidents: the two of them together was not a good combination. He was in a very bad state because receiving a refusal and both of them had different backgrounds. You could say that they were street children; they had had to fend for themselves at a very early age and had somehow made their journey here. We don’t really know how they got here really, but it was not like the Afghan boys who come here and who have fled from war or been sent off by their parents. But these boys had no parents, they were completely abandoned from the age of six so they were survivors and wanted to take care of themselves. If they didn’t get what they wanted then they just moved on.

LIVE: Where did they go? What do you mean by just moved on? Did they go into hiding or something?

STINA: Yes I guess you could say that. They did probably abscond, later to reappear in Norway. We knew nothing, but suddenly the (Swedish) Migration Board called and asked if we could take one of the boys back, that they for some reason discovered in Norway.

(Group interview with HVB staff 111026 page 3-4)

According to Stina (a HVB staff member), the state of some unaccompanied minors makes them a bad fit for the ordinary HVB facility. In her narration she highlights an incidence relating to two unaccompanied minors who disappeared from the facility later to end up in Norway. Her story is interesting as it connects to Pär's previous quote, but also to the official articulation of missing asylum-seeking children that were articulated in Norwegian and Swedish official policy (Chapter 5, section 5.2). The missing kids are positioned as problematic yet also as possible sufferers or erratics in need of support or supervision. They were coherently constructed as having a rather weak asylum claim, as their ordeal is considered connected to their history of possibly being "street children" and not Afghan war victims, active "survivors" and not passive anchor children sent away by their parents. Though Stina's narrative associates their absconding to the bad mental state of the minors, they are also emphasized as "overage" (as the HVB facility did not conceive them as children) and accustomed to "fending for themselves" (Cf. Chapter 5). What is also evident in both Stina and Pär's narratives are how running away is highlighted as an activity conducted by active and independent agents. In Pär's narration, absconding is emphasized as a way out of a terrible situation, while Stina presents it as the choice made by survivors eager to get what they want somewhere else. Evident in both constructions is the fact that absconding is not really problematic; it is the mental state of the minors that constitutes a problem.

Emma, Pär and Stina's narrations can be analyzed as connected to a sense of control loss, both with regard to how they talk about young people living in uncertainty while awaiting a decision on their asylum claim but also in how they narrate the act of working or dealing with them ("I feel powerless", "it's been turbulent years", "we judged them to be in need of more help than we could offer them in our accommodation"). Unaccompanied minors are concurrently constructed as the objects of an unpredictable asylum system. Living in uncertainty is often associated to illness and enhanced frailty. This period of lingering in uncertainty is thus conceptualized as a time or space when psychological distress results in physical symptoms (i.e., psychosomatics, as in the extract from Natalie's interview) but also as a time or space where children and young people risks "breaking down" or acting out.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Previous research point to how asylum seekers are often negatively affected by the period of uncertain anticipation associated with the asylum process (Andersson et al., 2005, 2010; Björnberg 2013).

EVA: I understood it like he did not want the others to know (that he had received an permanent residence permit). It was a bit like how will it affect the group? / ... / I mean we've got 11 boys, that's quite a lot of boys; it affects the group a lot.

(Group interview with HVB staff 110615 page 15)

Teachers, custodians and HVB staff also emphasize how unaccompanied children and youngsters awaiting their asylum decision often feel even worse when confronted with other children and youngsters who have been granted asylum. What emerges from the interviews is that the asylum process is constructed as some kind of lottery into which neither the unaccompanied children nor those working with them have any actual influence or insight into (Cf. Stretmo and Melander 2013). The outcome is hence never pre-defined, and unaccompanied children and those who work with them are forced to respond to what often becomes narrated as highly unequal conditions among unaccompanied minors: coexisting with the children and adolescents who have received their final approval or rejection are other unaccompanied minors who are still awaiting their asylum decisions. In schools, for example, students in the asylum process, those who have obtained their residence permit, undocumented and those awaiting deportation to another Dublin country interact. In the above interview extract from Eva (a HVB staff member) such uneven conditions are constructed as causing potential turmoil ("it affects the group a lot"), which could undermine the stability of the HVB facility in which she works. Living in uncertainty corresponds to teachers, social workers, custodians, healthcare practitioners, foster parents, and HVB staff's experiences of working with uncertainty. Working with uncertainty or children who break down opposes the understanding of unaccompanied children as easy-to-handle kids, which was expressed by some of the officials and support staff presented in the previous section of this chapter.

TEYMOR: I think the biggest difference when they arrive is their lack of psychological (well-being); the unaccompanied children do not feel well. When compared to those (asylum-seeking children) who arrive with their parents, it's a big difference. You do immediately see that they cannot concentrate and that they are always thinking, "When will I get my residence permit?" And when they get their residence permits they think, "How to do with my parents, will they be able to come or not?" So there are so many different thoughts going on in their mind, and then that becomes the reason why they cannot concentrate more on their studies, compared to a regular student who has parents here and has that, how to say it, that security.

(Group interview with secondary school teachers in rural municipality 111107 page 2f)

In Teymor's construction it is the absence of immediate parental care and support, and the unaccompanied children's conceived feelings of concern for those lost or left behind, that is stressed as causing a specific stressful situation. Although stress as such is seen as amplified by the asylum process, it is the absence of parents that causes a particular trauma (Cf. Engebriksen 2002; 2012 and Stretmo 2010). For Teymor, unaccompanied minors are also seen as in a much more destitute position compared to their asylum-seeking migrant peers. Receiving residence in Sweden does not automatically ease the pain either, as the child then will start to worry whether or not they will ever be reunited with the parent or if they can provide for a parent living under tough conditions somewhere else. In Teymor's notion it is the absence of parents, combined with the asylum process, that positions unaccompanied children as vulnerable. This conceptualization is similar to the official understanding that was highlighted in Chapter 4. When I analyzed what Norwegian and Swedish authorities problematized as the specifics of the unaccompanied child subject, it was coessentially the separation from primary care providers that constituted a particular trauma for the unaccompanied minor.

Other officials and support staff also draw on situational factors when narrating unaccompanied children or youngsters as subjects in risk of health-related problems. As more of these narrations focus on what were conceived as the inherent resources or capabilities of youngsters, vice versa the specific situational factors of the unaccompanied minors, the unaccompanied child becomes assigned a rather different subject positioning.

6.2.2 As any other youngster or child

Concurrent to the understanding of unaccompanied children as ambivalent sufferers, other officials and support staff also narrate their understanding of unaccompanied minors as vulnerable due to the situation they find themselves in, but also in what is constructed as the certain developmental period that unaccompanied minors undergo as normal teenagers, in other words adolescence. Accentuating how unaccompanied children are like any other child or youngster in general is central to such a narration.

BENGT: (Y)ou have to see these children as normal healthy teenagers with a lot of resources, but they have also been exposed to many extreme strain and they suffer from poor psychological health because of it. ... To be able to keep this balance between seeing these young people that they are in a normal development and that they have these special needs ... that's what you try to teach something about. (Group interview with healthcare practitioners 111006 page 7.)

PHILIP: (L)ike a process of liberation in rapid speed, one could say, like teenagers who gradually mature in their home and who are on their way to adulthood.

(Group interview with HVB staff 110617 page 7)

Bengt's (a paediatrician) narrative indicates that as a practitioner working with unaccompanied minors the challenge is to manage to confront unaccompanied minors as normal healthy teenagers with a lot of inherent resources but concurrently also possible inner turmoil (i.e., due to being in a "normal development"), yet also to comprehend the specific needs these minors might have depending on having endured rather painful experiences ("extreme strain"). His categorization could also point to a view where minors are seen as active, interpretative rights holders, which Meyer (2007) argues is a re-articulation of children in the making within the discourse of the child. According to Philip (a HVB staff member), who draws on a similar understanding, it is quintessential to see whatever happens in the HVB facility as a "process of liberation in rapid speed", as unaccompanied minors are first and foremost teenagers. Evident in the constructions conveyed in both Bengt and Philip's narrations are how unaccompanied minors are understood as any other child in a specific developmental phase (adolescence) and that their behavior and state of mind could also be understood as related to the specifics of simply being youths. Acting out, which was constructed as signalling that youngsters were in a terrible state of mind (see e.g., quote from Emma in the previous section), could consequently also be re-articulated as examples of teenagers in a "process of liberation" and hence be conceptualized quite differently. This framing tends to stress the possible similarities operating between groups of children regardless of their ethnic belonging, class, and gender, for example.

6.3 Unaccompanied minors as children and youngsters with shortcomings

In the following section, I focus on highlighting another perspective of unaccompanied minors that was sometimes articulated by teachers involved in the secondary or upper secondary preparatory programs where the majority of unaccompanied minors are enrolled (see Stretmo and Melander 2013; Stretmo and Melander 2014), yet also from social workers, custodians, foster parents, and HVB staff. Central to these narrations, unaccompanied minors and sometimes their close relatives or parents are conceptualized as having

specific inadequacies or shortcomings, thus calling for compensatory strategies amid them. In this section, however, it is how these shortcomings are articulated that is in focus.

6.3.1 Educational failings — shortcomings in the classroom

When understanding unaccompanied minors in their classrooms, the teachers and pedagogues compare this group of youngsters to other students in introductory classes, but also correspondingly to their Swedish-born peers. While preparatory students in general are framed as rather heterogeneous when it comes to the question of educational backgrounds (Cf. Bunar 2010 for similar findings), much of the teachers and pedagogues' work involves distinguishing an unaccompanied minor's different level of former education and placing them in the proper educational stream.

MARGARETA: (T)hose who have had good schooling knows how to go to school and have the study skills, knows how to do their homework, the appropriate learning skills. It goes quickly for them, they are enrolled (in the introductory school unit) between six months to a year, then they go another year, and get the grades they need. Some can even enroll into a national program after only two years. They are just but a few, and amongst the unaccompanied these (successful introductory students) are nearly non-existent, I would say.

(Group interview with preparatory upper secondary school in Gothenburg 111102 page 8)

According to Margareta (a teacher), the heterogeneity of the preparatory students offers them very different preparation in order to benefit from instructions and pedagogics given in the introductory classrooms. To “have the study skills” is a principle that Margareta sees as beneficial in order to move quickly from the preparatory class into a national school program. Rapidly being able to attend a national school program is therefore also implicitly understood as desirable. Concurrently, Margareta frames the introductory class as a transit space for those who need to acquire appropriate study, homework and learning skills in order to cross over to the regular school system. Meanwhile, according to her rationale, amongst the group of unaccompanied minors very few or nil have those learning skills or learning preparations needed. Inherent in Margareta's story is also that unaccompanied minors risk being stuck in the transit space of the introductory classes for a very long time. An “introductory school unit” is consequently brought forward as a school structure rather different from the national programs, as

students are expected to pass quickly through the introductory unit in order to enroll in a national program or the regular school system.

Margareta emphasizes learning skills and appropriate schooling as if it they were abilities of a general or objective character (simply phrasing it as “good schooling”). One could argue that the qualities she associates to good schooling ideally correspond to a Swedish/Western school system in general or a Swedish curriculum specifically. Good schooling as such does not constitute a universal knowledge base (jmf. Burman 2008; Elmeroth 2013). Still, it is the introductory students lack of such specific knowledge versus their own ability to quickly move about (or not) in the Swedish school system that she highlights (“Some can even enroll into a national program after only two years”, “amongst the unaccompanied these, successful introductory students, are nearly non-existent”).

GUNNAR: One kid was an illiterate when he first arrived (at the introductory school unit). It's a very low level ... Some have been lucky then, like this kid, his father was some kind of construction engineer ... technology engineer of some kind and who really pumped him full of English and natural science and subjects like that. ... They have the whole scale downwards too as this guy here who came and what does he have in his luggage, yes a year in some shitty school in a little shitty town in the mountains above (name of city, in a region south of the Sahara). What has he been doing there, yes, he has been rocking back and forth gabbling verses from the Koran, not understanding anything.

(Single interview with an upper secondary school teacher in a rural municipality 111219 page 7)

The upper secondary school teacher Gunnar expresses a rather similar narrative when articulating what he constructs as a general lack of schooling amongst unaccompanied children. By stating how “one kid was an illiterate when he first arrived” and that there is “a very low level”, Gunnar constructs unaccompanied minors as rather disadvantaged kids with regard to their former school achievements. Highlighting the boy who was “full of English and natural science” as an exception to a general rule (“some have been lucky”) offers further evidence to support Gunnar’s claim. It is also interesting to compare this quote to the concept of specific unaccompanied minors as sometimes constituting individual exceptions as discussed in section 6.1.1.2. I also argue that Gunnar’s quote could be analyzed as articulating a typology of class, indicating that the possible school trajectories of unaccompanied minors prior to their arrival in Sweden could be conceptualized as highly dependent on whether or not they have had economical possibilities to attend

school. Central to Gunnar's framing is also a conceptualization highlighting the global differences consisting between the Western and the South Eastern (or sub-Saharan more specifically) parts of the world, offering children very different opportunities to attend school.

Simultaneously, when Gunnar narrates how ("rocking back and forth gabbling verses from the Koran") and where ("a little shitty town in the mountains") school activities are conducted in other parts of the world, it is done with a reference that underscores the differences between these systems. A tendency amongst Swedish teachers to highlight the educational shortcomings of the introductory students when comparing them to other groups of students is also evident in other research (Cf. Torpsten 2012; Bunar 2010; Lunneblad and Asplund Carlsson 2009). Moreover, implicit in Gunnar's understanding is the dichotomy between what is inherently articulated as the well-functioning and hence intrinsically superior Swedish educational system and the remote and rigid and thus inferior one of the sub-Saharan region. This image constitutes a rather classical articulation of "the West and the rest" (Hall 2006), but also of how the sub-Saharan school system becomes somewhat othered in this comparison (Cf. de Los Reyes and Kamali 2005; Elmeroth 2008).

According to Bunar (2010), Torpsten (2012) and Stretmo and Melander (2013, 2014), Swedish teachers often express concern about what they perceive as an overall group of students (i.e., newly and late arriving students⁷⁵) with limited capability and resources in order to acquire the proper language skills needed or to achieve the learning goals expected of them. I furthermore argue that some of the teachers interviewed here also express concern related to what they construct as additional and structural obstacles, which work to complicate the educational achievements of the unaccompanied children in the Swedish context, in other words the scarcity of resources provided them and their positioning in the Swedish school system.

MAYLIS: Many similar things that makes us feel, both as teachers and our students ... passed over. When things happen, like (other students in the school) are going to the theater or anything else, one forgets that our students also belong ... This isn't the first time. We have encountered this so many times that it's like we are at the bottom. You could say we are about the same level as the cleaners; we are at the bottom of the (status) ladder.

⁷⁵ The term "newly" and/or "late arriving" students are technical terms used by Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) and points to migrants who are in their teens when they arrive in Sweden or obtain a residence permit there (see e.g., Bunar 2010 for a discussion on the different categorizations made and the purposes they serve).

(Group interview with secondary school teachers in a rural municipality 111107 page 12)

Maylis (a teacher) argues that teachers of introductory classes and their students are bypassed when different benefits are being handed out to the other classes in her school. Also articulated is how Maylis narrates the teachers' working with introductory education and the introductory students as situated at "the bottom of the (status) ladder" in her school. For her, the disadvantaged kids and the teachers working with them mirror one another, as neither are considered imperative or have high status in the everyday life of the Swedish school system. Although these differentiations are also operating in a seemingly subtle manner, Maylis's multiple uses of terms like "many similar things that makes us feel" are put to the fore as indicating that her experiences have strong claims of generalizability in them. In Maylis's extract, the introductory students and unaccompanied minors have a hard time being seen and are hence easily forgotten and passed over. The low status of the introductory students is matched by the equally low status of their teachers.

STINA: Our students do take the national tests, (directed) elementary school, year nine. And it's quite obvious that the text are adapted to Swedish youngsters and concern things that (Swedish students) care about in order to enable them to handle the rather difficult texts. I guess they reason like that those who make (the tests), but to our students it is rather difficult texts about subjects they do not understand. It's a mismatch there. Oskar Linnros. "Spot on" they might think, but like our students do not know of Oskar Linnros.

(Group interview with teachers from an upper secondary school in an urban municipality 120221 page 24)

Stina (an upper secondary teacher) offers a similar claim with regard to the invisibility and otherness of the introductory students. In her quote it is the fact that "our students" (i.e., students in the preparatory classes) rarely seem to be the main target of textbooks or those creating national tests that is of concern. Instead of facilitating introductory students by offering contextualized examples and assignments as pedagogical tools, Stina fears that the newly arrived children and youngsters risk becoming either confused or perplexed by them. According to de Waal Pastor (2012), unaccompanied minors in Norwegian classrooms are often confronted with assignments that implicitly or explicitly refer to situated or contextualized knowledge that many of the unaccompanied children who have spent most of their lives in different contexts consequently do not possess. Stina explains how composing school assignments on knowledge concerning Oskar Linnros (Swedish contempo-

rary musician, singer-songwriter and music producer) might facilitate the problem solving of the Swedish-born students, while leaving the introductory students (who might never have heard of Oskar Linnros) in the dark.

What is highlighted in Maylis and Stina’s quotes, respectively, is that they find introductory students to be “othered” by the school system. For them it is the Swedish-born students (and their teachers) that are constructed as the norm, while their introductory peers become the deviation, students that are articulated as struggling to learn Swedish, catch up in different subjects and to get a grip of the contextualized knowledge needed in order to complete the assignments expected of them, and who despite this are not given the same resources and support that the other kids receive.

HÅKAN: A year or two ago when it just teemed with kids, like it all happened in rapid speed. I think we had a turnover of 50-60 (new) kids in our business and that’s very, very much. Then it was crazy for a while. It was a puzzle to bring order to it. But otherwise I think ... that teachers sometimes can get into this kind of (echoingly whining) (*gnällsjälvsvägning*, sic.) about it: “I have no resources, its not going to work”... but then you have to think twice. You have got to be a bit creative and open to new things.

(Group interview with teachers at a secondary school in rural municipality 111118 page 9)

Other teachers conceptualize the issue of scarcity from a different angle. According to Håkan (a secondary school teacher), the main problem with unaccompanied minors is the massive influx of them (“when it just teemed with kids like it all happened in “rapid speed”), hence a system overload. His narration connects to the lack of control that was put to the fore when officials and support staff talked about working with uncertainty with regard to children in a bad state or the asylum process, but also to the official narrations in Chapters 4 and 5, that is the official loss of control scenario. According to Håkan’s rationale, teachers should be creative and “open to new things” instead of “echoingly whining” about their lack of resources. Working with unaccompanied minors and newly arrived students should open up to new thinking on didactics and pedagogics. In Håkan’s articulation, the school system or introductory school program is an allegory for an enterprise and the students attending it are being described in terms of circulations figures (“we had a turnover of 50-60 new kids”), hence legitimizing new modes of conduct to novel demands.

What is evident in the way teachers talk — regardless of whether they frame the children’s difficulties as due to structural factors that work to their disfavor or “mass influx” — is that the conceptualizations of the introductory students in general and unaccompanied students specifically as children with

educational shortcomings also color the expectations that their teachers in talk seem to harbor for them. In the passage below, three teachers at a secondary school in Gothenburg explain what they see as a worst-case scenario of the possible futures of unaccompanied children in the Swedish labor market context.

LENA: They will not be able to make their grades before they turn 20, and then they will have to go through to adult education and the question is whether they will ever get complete grades in all (required) subjects, whether they will ever get their qualifications or if they will end up doing something else.

STINA: If there are any unqualified jobs available that is or something like that ...

KARIN: I was to say in a pizza bakery or selling vegetables ... I can imagine it will be in that kind of small enterprise. Or maybe in a restaurant maybe, the Chinese-speaking students, for example.

LENA: Or they might marry and have children, become a full-time mum.

(Group interview with upper secondary school teachers in an urban municipality 120221 page 4)

In the above dialogue unaccompanied minors are constructed as in risk of social marginalization related to having incomplete grades and not being qualified for (either) secondary education and subsequently higher education, and consequently not having access to qualified employment. According to the three teachers, only a limited branch of the labor market is then available. As unaccompanied children as a group is concurrently articulated as children with educational shortcomings, this future risk scenario is highlighted as possible. Rather strong correlations are made between inadequate qualifications and insecure working conditions, low-paid work, unpaid housework, and unemployment, in other words a positioning that is often labeled exclusion (*“utanförskap”*) in the Swedish context. Their possible futures are also circumscribed by what the teachers narrate as racial (*“ethnified”*) and/or gendered division of labor, where, for instance, the Chinese speaking students are framed as having a future in a low-wage restaurant and catering industry versus the unaccompanied girls as possible stay-at-home mothers.

Evident in the different conceptualizations made by the interviewed teachers and pedagogues is that they seemingly narrate opposing but somewhat ambivalent understandings of their students. Unaccompanied children are positioned as subjects with educational shortcomings, both in their academic pasts (lack of prior schooling) and present (struggling to achieve in school), but also referring to their future (or possible labor market prospects). The teachers sometimes frame the children and youngsters' struggle by point-

ing out structural factors working to their disadvantage, either as global inequality or “shitty schools in the mountains” and poverty, but also with reference to newly arrived children risking discrimination by a Swedish school system having the Swedish-born child as its intrinsic point of reference. Evident in the framings of unaccompanied students is also a tendency to homogenize them and assign them very problem-oriented positioning (Cf. de los Reyes and Kamali 2005; Bunar 2010).

6.3.2 Ambivalent foster homes and kinship ties — families with deficits

Central to many of the stories by the social workers interviewed were discussions concerning where to resettle unaccompanied minors and which types of placements should be considered as the most suitable alternative for them. According to Sweden’s National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) (2013), the re-placement of unaccompanied minors involves either putting them in a HVB unit, an officially appointed foster home or kinship (“network”) family home.

Stretmo and Melander (2013) analyzed how social workers negotiated the three different options and found that while a placement in institutions (i.e., HVB) were constructed as essentially opposing implicit ideas of family home and family life, the officially appointed foster homes were often constructed as the most favorable option (or the lesser of the two evils).⁷⁶ Officially appointed foster homes were often ambivalently viewed as conditional, as it is the foster family that normally decides if it wants to take on a child or youngster or not and when the arrangement is to be ended. The fact that the official foster home also is a remunerated assignment and hence an economical arrangement came on collision course with the social workers implicit idea of “ideal” families and/or homes (Cf. Stretmo and Melander 2013: 107-125). The ideal home or family was implicitly emphasized as the close and exclusive union of reciprocally dependent people sticking together for better and worse. The conditionality of an official foster home was often stressed with reference to the unconditionality of a so-called “kinship family” placement,

⁷⁶ According to the social workers, HVB facilities were the second option compared to a foster family, because it is an institution with staff going “home” at the end of the day, personnel going in and out and hence jeopardizing the establishment of close relationships, but also because they were critical of how a profit-driven organization might lead staff to take on a rather voracious attitude toward the children. The officially appointed foster homes, on the other hand, were favored since it was considered to provide the child/youngster a “real family”, that is two parents, a house, their network of family and friends, and the possibility to create enduring and close relationships and receive good language training in practice (Cf. Stretmo and Melander 2013).

although placements along with kinship families were also demarcated by a lot of ambivalence from the social workers' point of view (Stretmo and Melander 2013).⁷⁷

In the following section, I will look into how such ambivalences were articulated by social workers involved in the coaching and follow-ups with foster homes with kinship ties in the Gothenburg.

GUDRUN: (I) have been working for 30 years and it came as a total shock to me when I first came here because the unaccompanied children, in particular, had families that we would not otherwise (approve). That there are families of lower quality that are to receive the unaccompanied children, that's a discussion today. We have orders from above, you could say, that tell us to say yes to relatives even though they do not really hold. They might have arrived together with the unaccompanied minor so then they cannot (speak) any Swedish, they may not know how this society work, so they cannot support the integration of the child into this country because they are too busy themselves. They may be illiterate and suffer from bad health themselves in different ways. I used to think it was very tough, but I have been forced to adjust and then try to support these families as much as possible so the children can have a decent life here in Sweden.

(Group interview with social workers in urban municipality 120109 page 2)

Gudrun discusses a rather critical understanding of the general policy in her municipality of re-placing newly arrived unaccompanied children with their relatives.⁷⁸ Gudrun phrases her account quite strongly, describing that it was a “shock” to see that the authorities placed unaccompanied children with families of a “lower quality” or families that don't necessarily endure. By pointing out that she has 30 years of social work experience, Gudrun also articulates her claim as quite strong and legitimate. According to her rationale the relatives of the unaccompanied minors could themselves be newcomers to Sweden, hence lacking the sufficient knowledge of the Swedish society or language. Furthermore, kinship families are also likely to suffer from traumatic experiences and/or be illiterates, thus making these families ill-prepared to cater to the needs of an unaccompanied minor. This conceptual-

⁷⁷ In Stretmo and Melander's (2013) study, the majority of the children and youngsters who settled in the GR during 2008 lived with next of kin or in so-called “kinship families”. These placements, whether they became remunerated or not, were found to be more stable and enduring compared to placements in HVB facilities or officially appointed homes.

⁷⁸ According to the Swedish Social Service Act, the social worker should always favor a placement together with the child's relatives or friends of the family (*nätverksfamilj*, “network families”) when resettling a child. According to international research on children in fosterhomes, kinship/network placements are often found to be more lasting compared to placements in officially appointed foster homes (See for instance Testa, 2002, Holtan, 2005 and Farmer, 2009).

ization bridges the understanding that was put to the fore by teachers in the previous section, as the unaccompanied minor that Gudrun talks about could be an educationally disadvantaged child in need of additional stimuli and support. The problem that Gudrun presents is two-fold: 1) social services officers approve what Gudrun articulates as inadequate families, hence jeopardizing the possible well-being of unaccompanied minors; and 2) these guidelines are top-down recommendations (“we have orders from above”), hence something Gudrun cannot object to (“I have been forced to adjust”). In order to offer the children a decent life Gudrun has adopted strategies to compensate the families by supporting them in different ways. What is evident in Gudrun’s construction is that the kinship family is viewed as somehow fundamentally different from officially appointed foster families, and therefore in need of specific and countervailing tactics. According to Amos and Parmar (2011), stereotype or simplistic ideas of black or migrant families furthermore risk to position their homes as essentially “unsuitable” for the replacement of children.

MARIE: Of course it helps to be able to call the family and have a conversation, and that the family can call (us) whenever they encounter any problems. It is harder to reach us if they don’t know the language. If you do not even know the language then it is harder to reach us even if you realize you might have to do so.

GU DRUN: So it’s easier when a foster family consists of unrelated countryman because then you can work so much more on how a foster home should be like. But as soon as it involves relatives then you have to deal with the ties to the home country and those sitting in the home country and who like to control things. From some countries it is like that. In Somalia, they sit and control (the kinship family) from (the homeland), and it is very difficult for the Somali family here to ignore the (relatives) in the homeland. But if you have a free, unrelated Somali foster home then they say, “No, we have no money for you back home or we do not obey your wishes because we have regulations to follow here”. Yes, they’re much easier to work with. (Group interview with social workers in urban municipality 120109 page 6)

In the quote above, Marie and Gudrun debate what they frame as the negative side of working with a kinship family versus an officially appointed foster home. According to their rationale, there is a problem of visibility and lack of control with regard to the kinship family, either constructed as language difficulties or as issues in connection to loyalty. The “problem” is accentuated as a Somali-allegiance issue, hence stressing the difficulty to guide or coach a Somali kinship home. In Gudrun’s narration, strong family loyalties make the Somali kinship home weak and susceptible, or as a mari-

onette in the hands of the family back in Somalia (“In Somalia, they sit and control (the kinship family) from (the homeland)”). In Marie’s narration, the difficulty of coaching the kinship family is highlighted as a problem of language and how problematic it is to offer support or for the home to make contact when the kinship family speaks insufficient Swedish.⁷⁹ Yet, the problem that Marie highlights is also in reference to the kinship family as possibly a bit problematic in itself, as she indicates that there could exist kinship families that do not fully comprehend the importance of contacting social services regardless of their Swedish eloquence. Gudrun points to the desirability of officially appointing a Somali family with no kinship ties as a foster home (what she narrates as a “unrelated Somali foster home”), as such a home is narrated as easier to cooperate with.

The fact that kinship placements are normally understood as proceeded by private arrangements or an agreement between biological parents and the foster parents also comes to construct these alliances differently from the officially appointed foster homes.⁸⁰ In the interviews with social workers (and custodians), kinship families tended to be regarded as problematic families, as they are seen as complicating the possible integration of the unaccompanied minors.

MARIE: You’re loyal to your aunt, it’s like you don’t really dare to tell how you’re truly feeling.

MALIN: Moreover, we’ve had some unaccompanied, boys, yes, who have come to a Swedish (foster) family and it is so different what they receive ... then you realize that what you expect is that they (already) know this, but then it turns out that they don’t know these, perhaps the most obvious things, like how to use a microwave or how to use a vacuum cleaner. ... These things that from the very beginning are so obvious to us because we start at a early age. And it becomes so much more visible what they can and cannot do when they come to a Swedish family.

(Group interview with social workers in urban municipality 120109 page 4)

The understanding of the kinship home as less conditional but yet also as a result of a private arrangement enhances a concern amongst the social workers, which is whether or not the unaccompanied minors dare criticize their conditions. Given the kinship ties, family loyalties might make it impos-

⁷⁹ Interesting in this regard is how the insufficient language problem very often is put to the fore as the problem of migrants speaking inadequate Swedish and not as a problem of, for instance, the social workers’ incompetence in Somali.

⁸⁰ Cf. “Rinkebymodellen” in Andersson 2001 for similar lines of reasoning in kinship placements with migrant relatives.

sible or difficult for the youngster or child to evaluate their situation in the home. The lack of control over and transparency of the conditions in the kinship home is an issue at stake in the social workers' narrations. In the interview extract above, the two social workers, Marie and Malin, work to evaluate a kinship placement compared to an officially appointed foster home, according to what they respectively offer unaccompanied minors. A Swedish officially appointed foster home is understood as a context in which the minor might get to practice everyday Swedish activities — which in the quote above is made synonymous with using a microwave or the vacuum cleaner⁸¹ — whereas the kinship home is constructed as a place where children lack this important training. This also points to how cooking and cleaning are intrinsically accentuated as part of important Swedish knowledge, vital for the possible integration or inclusion of unaccompanied minors within Swedish society.

What is evident in the social workers' narrations is the ambivalence in which they regard the placement of unaccompanied minors (or other children in need of re-placement). Inherent in the negotiations made by the social worker are also ideas and understandings about what unaccompanied minors need and where they ideally should live their everyday lives. As Stretmo and Melander (2013) note, the foster home is constructed as a possibly more favorable option compared to an institution, as kinship ties tends to be viewed better than taking on a child for the sake of money. Yet, at the same time, kinship families are perceived as possible sufferers of economic deprivation or live in exclusion from society under rather cramped housing conditions in the concrete suburbs, conditions that are articulated as causing distress and a life in social exclusion for the unaccompanied minors (Stretmo and Melander 2013; Cf. Backlund et al. 2012). This construction connects to structural factors but tends to construct the kinship families as problematic ("of less quality" as Gudrun phrased it) due to what is put to the fore as "cultural aspects" or a perceived lack of the proper (cultural or Swedish) knowledge (Cf. Wikström 2007, 2009; Bunar 2010 for similar lines of argumentation concerning the construction of migrant families as essentially problematic families). In the social workers' (Malin, Gudrun and Marie)

⁸¹ This quote points to the social workers' rather stereotypical ideas of what originating from sub-Saharan countries and so forth implies in practice. According to Ngozi Adichie (2009), such stereotypes are the result of simplistic or one-dimensional stories being repeated, such as the idea that minors from Somalia might never have used a stove or even seen a microwave.

quotes the Somali kinship family is assigned an inferior and binary position to the “liberated Somali family” or the officially appointed foster home, thus bringing forward the cultural belonging of the kinship family as a factor that could possibly menace the integration of unaccompanied minors. Kinship ties are further seen as obstructing the proper conduct of the foster home as the foster family might feel obliged to contribute to the family in the country of origin. Unaccompanied minors are constructed as subjects in need of close and enduring relationships (Stretmo and Melander 2013), yet also in need of guidance, as they are perceived as lacking “obvious knowledge” according to the rationale of the social workers interviewed here. The private arrangement preceding a placement in a kinship home makes this option less transparent compared to officially appointed foster homes, according to the social workers. It is described as difficult to know whether lack of criticism from the children of their own well-being in the home is an indication of possible loyalty toward relatives or signalling that everything is fine. A placement in a Swedish family (or in a well-integrated foster home of country men) is also understood as more favorable from an integration point of view but also because of transparency: social services have better access to the home.⁸²

6.3.3 Problematic boys and vulnerable and oppressed girls

What was evident in the quotes made by the social workers in the previous section was a view of unaccompanied minors as specifically hard to replace. Such conceptions were also connected to ideas of gender, which is something I discuss in the following section.

JASMIN: (It) was how (the rural municipality) reasoned from the very beginning. Yes they're supposed to be re-placed in a foster family, but there are few foster homes ready to receive these children. There is such a shortage of foster homes and it's not hard to understand why the Swedish family would not like to have a 17-year-old Afghan boy who maybe

⁸² According to Stretmo and Melander (2013), social workers in the GR did not follow-up on the cohort of unaccompanied children in kinship homes that arrived in 2008 as thorough and systematically as children in officially appointed foster homes or HVB facilities. One might speculate whether this was partly an effect of the fact that Gothenburg (where the majority of kinship homes reside) did not have an official reception in 2008, and hence no earmarked funds for these kinds of follow-ups, or partly a cause of the fact that the social workers have less access to the kinship homes and are made less involved in the everyday activities of the unaccompanied children living in them. Stretmo and Melander (Ibid) argue that the social workers' feelings of ambivalence toward the kinship families made them less inclined to make contact.

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just arrived half a year ago to Sweden, who doesn't speak any Swedish, doesn't make it in school, doesn't know Swedish codes, and so on.

(Interview with social worker in rural municipality11222 page 6)

According to Jasmine (a social worker), difficulty re-placing unaccompanied minors is due to the fact that it is hard to appoint new foster homes, as “these children” (unaccompanied minors) are Afghan boys in their teens. The 17-year-old Afghan youngster she refers to is furthermore framed as lacking Swedish social knowledge and language skills, making him a potential challenge. Evident in Jasmine's narration is the scarcity of officially appointed foster homes amid the need for good re-placement alternatives. This is also put to the fore as a kind of “sellers market” as the demand far exceeds the supply of foster homes. What is also highlighted is a similar view of the unaccompanied minor as a rather problematic, gendered and aged subject. In this section of Chapter 6, I further examine how unaccompanied minors are constructed when positioned with an intersection of age, gender and ethnicity.

Evident in many of the interviews conducted with officials and support staff is how they intrinsically construct unaccompanied minors as specific subjects of knowledge to ideas of specific gendered traits or dispositions and/or specific ethnic attributes and belongings. Framing unaccompanied minors as gendered beings is often done to display what was constructed as sometimes problematic unaccompanied boys and understood as vulnerable but yet occasionally also ambivalent unaccompanied girls.

ACHMED: I don't think there's any difference, apart from the language thing, otherwise all teenagers have the same needs no matter where they come from., Everybody wants to be noticed, everybody wants new chicks ("brudar), they all want trendy clothes. I don't think there's any difference. The only thing that distinguishes them is the cultural clash, rights, views on (having) girls or not (having) girls. But some are quick learners. Everybody feels that they want to be noticed; one copies a model, a haircut. In that regard I find that there is no difference.

(Group interview with foster parents 110615 page 14)

In the interview extract above, Achmed (a foster parent) draws on the understanding of unaccompanied minors as a case of teenagers (unaccompanied minors as any other child, see also section 6.2.2). In his perception being a teenager is understood to be a subject craving attention from others, having a genuine interest in fashion and looks, and experimenting with different styles or testing different identities. Inherent in Achmed's understanding is also that

the unaccompanied minor is also implicitly a male with a specific heterosexual interests in girls (“everybody wants new chicks”). Still, there is something about these unaccompanied boys that he also describes as different (“apart from the language”) or even as constituting a potential cultural collision: the young unaccompanied boy’s understandings of girls and of rights. Although Achmed talks of girls in general one could analyze his narration as inherently synonymous with Swedish girls. The unaccompanied boys, according to Achmed’s rationale, hence harbor expectations or perspectives that could collide with everyday life in Sweden. By highlighting some unaccompanied boys as more prone and/or quicker to adapt to the Swedish way of life (hence like any other teenagers) than others, Achmed constructs divisions between unaccompanied children. Although Achmed stresses the similarities between Swedish youngsters and unaccompanied minors, rather than developing his thoughts on those who do not adapt quickly, other officials and support staff direct their focus to what they constructs as possible problematic boys.

HÅKAN: It’s very different: some blend in nicely while others don’t. But when it comes to the unaccompanied, that’s mostly boys who might have limited knowledge, so for them it might be a little bit more difficult. ... I could imagine that they must experience incredible culture clashes ... having had their experiences and then watching how girls and boys hang out together in an unproblematic manner: no veils, no such thing as differences between the sexes in this regard. So I have many times wondered what might go on in their heads when they experience our world, but I sense that they somehow observe it and try their best.

(Group interview with teachers at a secondary school in rural municipality 111118 page 14)

This construction is elaborated in Håkan’s (a teacher) quote above, wherein the unaccompanied minor is explicitly articulated as a boy struggling to adapt in Sweden due to his “limited knowledge”. He is articulated as an exception to the more easily adapting migrant youngster who “blend in nicely” (thus opposing the idea of unaccompanied minors as constituting positive exceptions that were articulated in section 6.1.1). The difficulty of the unaccompanied boy is seen as experiencing “incredible culture clashes”, which is similar to Achmed’s phrasing. Håkan’s story also implies an understanding of “our world” (a notion of Swedish culture) versus that of the unaccompanied minors as binary opposites. While Sweden and Swedishness are constructed as an absence of veils (pointing to the use of *hijabs*, *niqabs* or *burqhas*) and to boys and girls interacting and to gender equality, the culture (“their world”) of the unaccompanied boy is intrinsically connected to gender inequality, covered and veiled women, and the separation of boys and girls

from one another. In Håkan's quote it is not the academic shortcomings of the unaccompanied subject that are put to the fore but the unaccompanied boys lack of Swedish knowledge or how to get by in "our world".

LISELOTT: Although I talk to the boys about this and that, I mean when you're out and about with them during summertime in a Swedish environment, you observe how they are taken aback when they see how scantily dressed the Swedish girls are. And that is a very good starting point in order to talk about that one isn't available as a girl in Sweden, even though you dress like you do. Then you have to talk about that with the Muslim boys, because in the beginning it's a all very new to them that the girls are so different, and then they believe them to be different all the way, but they're not.

(Group interview with custodians 111017 page 3 1)

LOUISA: Then there have been boys from (the introductory school unit) and Swedish girls ... where (the boys) have a behavior that can be very provocative, as well as be watching the girls in a manner that girls find very uncomfortable.

(Group interview with secondary school teachers from a rural municipality 111124 page 5)

Liselott (a custodian) and Louisa (a teacher) highlight similar understandings when they describe some of the challenges they experience with regard to the reception of unaccompanied minors: the possible confrontation between unaccompanied boys and girls. For them unaccompanied boys could cause possible distress by not displaying the proper behavior ("watching the girls in a manner that girls find very uncomfortable"). In Louisa's understanding the unaccompanied boys have been displaying provocative behavior that makes (Swedish) girls feel unpleasant.

My aim here is not to imply that acts of sexual harassment should not lead to prompt action taken in schools (or elsewhere in society). It is rather to highlight how Louisa, by underlining that unwanted sexualized and aggressive behavior are characteristics of unaccompanied minor boys, risks stereotypically framing the social problem of sexual harassment as culturalized or culturally biased. Louisa implicitly constructs the undesirable behavior made by some unaccompanied boys as a representative problem or a common denominator specific to the group of unaccompanied minors. Sexual harassment is also a practice conducted by Swedish men.

While the girls Louisa reference, much like in Achmed's extract, could implicitly be understood as Swedish girls, Liselott definitely frames her girls as Swedish. In Liselott's narration, these Swedish girls are in some ways constructed as binary oppositions to unaccompanied boys, but also as opposing other groups of girls (girls that unaccompanied boys are more accus-

tomed to?). The Swedish girls are described as scantily dressed, hence indicating that they could be different or more (sexually) available than these other girls. The unaccompanied boys are synonymous with Muslim boys who risk mistaking Swedish nudity or being scantily dressed for accessibility. Implicit in Liselott's rationale is a perception of girls and boys as displaying different behavior yet also a universal heterosexuality: boys as the active pursuers of girls and sex, and girls as passive gatekeepers. According to Liselott, it hence becomes important to teach the unaccompanied boys, especially the Muslim ones, how to behave with regard to girls that might look and act different from other types of girls (from their homeland or Muslim girls?). Swedish girls who look, dress and behave different are not essentially active pursuers of sex and thus different from the girls the boys are accustomed to ("they believe them to be different all the way, but they're not").

In Achmed, Håkan, Louisa, and Liselott's narratives, the unaccompanied minor subject is positioned as a male youngster in need of guidance in order to make it in Sweden and with Swedish girls. Similar to the articulations made by some of the teachers in section 6.3.1, this male subject is also positioned as being potentially inadequate: instead of educational shortcomings, what is constructed as possible cultural failings that are brought into focus. Inherent in the narrations are a view of unaccompanied boys as a group lacking the vital knowledge of women's rights in Sweden, as they are supposed to originate from cultural contexts put to the fore as countries where women's rights are neglected and female movement of freedom limited. In such a comparison, Sweden is brought forward as a gender equal society and as a binary opposition to what, for instance, is narrated as Islamic/Muslim contexts. According to Wikström (2007, 2009), Muslim masculinity is often made synonymous with the repression of women, a reactionary patriarchal system and sexual aggressiveness. Johansson and Lunneblad (2012) argue in accordance to such a view that young migrant men and boys positioned as originating from Islamic countries are often perceived as in need of "extra training" in order to learn how to treat Swedish women correctly or be more in tune with the Swedish way.⁸³ With regard to the interview extracts quoted here, the unaccompanied minor boys' display or understanding of sexuality is potentially also constructed as threatening or a menace, as he is narrated as unfamiliar with Swedish society and maybe what intrinsically is constructed as the "proper" display of sexuality. The unaccompanied boy subject is hence deemed as guilty by association because of being positioned in a Muslim category or simply by originating from Islamic practicing regions of the

⁸³ Interesting in this conceptualization is how the view of Sweden as a gender equal society can coexist an understanding of men and women as harboring essentially different sexualities.

world. Implicit in such an understanding is also the view of Sweden and/or Swedishness becoming synonymous with freedom and gender equality, while the non-Swedish becomes constructed as “a system of thought characterized by how female subordination and male violence against women are seen as natural and legitimate” (Elmeroth 2008: 35f. My translation). Such articulations further underline and legitimize the need for Swedish society to take action or to control and sanction the potentially dangerous and uncontrolled heterosexuality of male youngsters with migrant backgrounds, such as unaccompanied boys (see e.g., Hammarén 2008; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Elmeroth et al. 2012). This framing is also similar to a more overall post-colonial problematization of the inherent “West and the rest” perception evident in European thought and self-perception. (Cf. Saïd 1978; de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005; de Los Reyes and Kamali 2005; Hall 2006).

Although unaccompanied minors are most commonly narrated as “boys”, sometimes officials and support staff refer to what they say is the specific situation for unaccompanied girls. When they talk of young unaccompanied women or girls these narratives often dwell on situations that are considered gender specific. This also points to how the unaccompanied boy becomes normalized within the discourse of unaccompanied minors.

INGEGERD: I have an example of such a case just now that I've had to take over from another custodian, and it's such a disaster really. We need to move the girl, perhaps even from (the Urban City) because it has turned out to be so complicated in this (kinship) foster home placement. She has been very, very exploited by that family, she's actually been used as a maid and has taken care of all the little ones ... I have a boy too who is in a similar (situation) ... but he will not be exploited. He lives there but he says one thing with his relatives present and another when only we are present, the social worker, he and I. Then he wants to move, but if the relative is present he says, “No everything is alright, I don't want to move”. (Group interview with two custodians 111202 page 10)

In Ingegerd's (a custodian) narrative, a situation with of one the unaccompanied girls in her custody is articulated as problematic. Her story links to the problematization expressed in the previous section, 6.3.2, and to how some custodians, teachers and social workers dread the fact that some unaccompanied children's loyalties toward their extended family prevents them from criticizing the conditions in a kinship foster home. With regard to this narrative it is also underlined that being a girl further enhance the risks the social services officers associate with such loyalties. As an unaccompanied girl, according to Ingegerd's rationale, one could risk being exploited as unpaid house labor. By emphasizing that this is one “example of such a

case”, Ingegerd claims that the specific situation of her unaccompanied girl is something that many other unaccompanied minor girls could endanger in a kinship foster home. This image is also connected to the feeling of lack of control and insight in children’s situations, but also linked to a positioning of the kinship family as a special kind of family and the traditional gendered division of labor that is constructed as part of such a home. According to de Los Reyes and Mulinari (2005) and Wikström (2007), for instance, migrant families are often projected as more traditional, backward and patriarchal than Swedish families. Ingegerd’s narration seems to link to this type of conceptualization. The unaccompanied girl is constructed as loyal and submissive femininity, suppressed by her family and her own feelings of loyalty toward them. Furthermore, the unaccompanied girl is said to be an extra vulnerable subject as she is framed as being in risk of abuse as a modern house slave in a way that the unaccompanied boy does not.

LOTTA: And then the Somali women don’t do much. They are never outdoors, so if I had lived the way (my foster daughter) does, I would be freaking out. Sometimes she comes in late because she’s been with friends, but when she is at home then she can stay inside, day-in and day-out ... she doesn’t leave the house.

(Group interview with foster parents 110615 page 9)

When officials and support staff talk about unaccompanied girls in general it is often the Somali girls that are highlighted specifically. According to Stretmo and Melander (2013), the majority of unaccompanied minor girls that arrived in the GR during 2008 were of Somali origin, and many of them were placed with extended family members in kinship foster families. Somalia is also the second biggest country of origin amongst the unaccompanied minors that made claims for asylum in Sweden during the time when the interviews were conducted (Cf. Swedish Migration Board 2012). This could be one of the reasons why it was the Somali girl in particular that was pointed out when the specific situation of unaccompanied girls was narrated during the interviews. This could also be explained by the fact that the Somali girls, women, boys, and men stand out in the Swedish context in other ways because of skin color, religious affiliation, language, and clothing (Cf. Wikström 2007). In comparison to other migrant groups the Somali subject is hence constructed as conspicuous.

Lotta’s (a foster parent) narrative above details her experiences of having a Somali foster daughter. According to her, most Somali women are passive home sitters who do not leave the home or do much. The foster daughter,

who is framed as choosing to stay inside the home (i.e., her room), mirrors the framing of Somali feminine passiveness. Lotta's own foster daughter's behavior is hence made understandable as an example of the Somali way, contrasting how Lotta positions herself as someone who would be "freaking out" if she were to stay at home all day long. For her Swedishness is constructed as an active and sociable agency contrasting this different and passive Somaliness. The act of a teenage girl staying inside the home and in her own room is thus given a cultural explanation.

Lotta also intrinsically offers an alternative reading (Cf. Lenz Taguschi 2006 and the importance of pointing to alternative readings) of her foster daughter's behavior. She is also positioned as the only Somali woman (carrying a chador and a long skirt) or black girl in this particular white Swedish middle-class neighborhood. As a newly arrived youngster Lotta's foster daughter is furthermore enrolled in a specific introductory school unit far away from the home. Feelings of loneliness and having few friends in the neighborhood could also offer an alternative reading as to why this particular girl stays in her room. According to Stretmo and Melander (2013), many unaccompanied minors — like most teenagers — keep in contact with their friends and family members on Facebook and other online communities. Staying at home does hence not necessarily imply passiveness or that they are not interacting with peers.

Evident in the different interview extracts quoted here is a view of unaccompanied minors as inherently gendered and cultural individuals. The notions of gender and culture intersect when officials and support staff talk about unaccompanied boys and girls as specific subjects of knowledge. In the narratives the unaccompanied minor is often articulated as a boy or young man in need of training in order to overcome his somewhat problematic cultural carriage. As a Muslim boy he is constructed as traditional and less inclined to show modern Swedish girls respect by sexually harassing them or mistaking being scantily dressed for availability instead of freedom. The unaccompanied girl is very often put forth as Somali, a femininity understood as essentially different from the Swedish woman. The Somali girl is similar to the image of the Muslim boy: understood as traditional and loyal but also passive and submissive. She needs to be "rescued" from the family loyalties and obligations that risks binding her as a modern house slave.

6.4 Concluding remarks

With regard to the different conceptualizations I analyze in this chapter, unaccompanied minors are sometimes highlighted as positive exceptions to problematic categories, and at other times they are constructed as vulnerable children or as children with different shortcomings. What is also clear is that officials and support staff harbor opposite understandings of unaccompanied minors, and that these different problematizations coexist. According to Eide (2005), such opposing images have led to a Norwegian conceptualization of unaccompanied minors as “ambiguous children”. His argument is supported by the findings in this analysis. Many of the constructs in Chapter 6 have further been of a dichotomist character: the unaccompanied minor is sometimes accentuated as a poor sufferer in need of support and aid, yet at other times as problematic subjects in need of guidance, and sometimes as a survivor of harsh circumstances or a source of distress and turmoil. This also points to what can be conceptualized as so-called undecidables (Cf. Bauman 1991). These constitute the categories of people that find it difficult to fit in in existing social categories, and that their very presence constructs a state of societal ambivalence.

The interviews offer interesting insights into how articulations and narrations in official and public problematizations imbedded in the programs of governing become re-articulated and reformed when translated into practice in the micro context. This is evident, for instance, in how caregivers sometimes object to some of the official and public framings emphasized in Norway and Sweden by highlighting unaccompanied minors as positive exceptions or as cases of any other child. The image of the unaccompanied child as any other child furthermore links the articulations made by Swedish caregivers to a conceptualization accentuated in Norwegian newspaper narrations (Chapter 4, section 4.1.1) from 2000-2005. In other contexts officials and support staff mirror the more dominant views and ambivalent constructions of unaccompanied minors made in Norwegian and Swedish public and official talk.

The constructions of unaccompanied minors evident in the interviews with the 80 caregivers are also interconnected to inherent ideas of girls amid boys and tales of ethnic belonging. In Chapter 5, my analysis describes how intrinsic constructions of age work to create distinctions between groups of children in policy, hence legitimizing different action in this regard. In Chapter 6, the intersection of gender and ethnicity appear to work in an analogous fashion, constructing the unaccompanied minor as either a problematic mas-

culinity of Afghan or Muslim origin, or as a suppressed yet ambivalent Somali feminine. These distinctions are also interesting to highlight with reference to what Fassin (2005) and Watters (2007) argue is a moral economy operating to single out the deserved from the undeserved receivers of specific actions and aids. The problematizations does furthermore point to what Löfstrand (2005) Mattson (2010) and Herz (2012) argues in relation to social work as a gender and ethnic stratifying apparatus, as women and men and Swedes and non-Swedes are conceived differently in ways that legitimize different actions. In the next chapter, I scrutinize some of the actions deemed legitimate given the problematizations put forth by caregivers.

7

Working with unaccompanied minors

In Chapter 6, I analyze some of the common conceptualizations and narratives that support staff and officials in the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR), emphasized when they talked about unaccompanied children and youngsters. These conceptions and ascribed subject positionings did not only construct unaccompanied minors as specific subjects of knowledge, but also had clear implications for what kind of reception system or “work” with unaccompanied minors that was deemed legitimate by the interviewed officials and support staff, and how they narrated their own work with unaccompanied children and youngsters. In Chapter 7, I highlight some of the strategies officials and support staff articulated as applicable and pertinent to the caring or handling of unaccompanied minors.

One of the theoretical points of departure in this thesis is how different programs of governing are created, legitimized and translated through various segments of society, as such this chapter examines various approaches to the daily work with unaccompanied minors that were articulated by officials and support staff. Some of these tactics and/or methods were related to what can be framed as compensating pedagogics, a governing aiming to counteract the conceived disadvantages of unaccompanied minors (section 7.1). Furthermore, I demonstrate that the compensatory tactics were also complemented by tactics to govern and/or manage unaccompanied minors (section 7.2) that often balance the dimensions of control-oriented strategies (section 7.2.1) and care-oriented strategies (section 7.2.2). Each of these governing tactics was also connected to the specific articulations of unaccompanied children and youngsters that I highlight in Chapter 6.

7.1 Counteracting disadvantage

Evident in many interviews with officials and support staff was a problematization of unaccompanied children as subjects in need of specific training and/or knowledge in order to succeed in school or in Swedish society. Teachers often expressed these views, but similar concepts were also evident in the narratives of social workers, custodians, home for care and housing (HVB) staff, and foster parents. When framed as disadvantaged kids, the unaccompanied minors were also to some extent “othered”, thus also making calls for novel strategies or methods seem appropriate.

7.1.1 Lowering expectations and doing difference

When teachers and pedagogues talked about unaccompanied minors many of them agreed that this particular group of students was extremely disadvantaged because of their lack of proper schooling prior to their arrival in Sweden. In Chapter 6, section 6.3.1, I provide examples of how teachers in many ways framed unaccompanied minors as a specific group of children with educational shortcomings, but also how some of the teachers experienced them as othered by the school system.

The constructions of unaccompanied minors as disadvantaged kids with academic shortcomings were noteworthy because the teachers implicitly and explicitly also seemed to harbor very low expectations of their possibilities in the school system and what they articulated as imaginable futures for them. On the one hand, the teachers constructed the struggles of their students in relation to their academic shortfall and a tough labor market. On the other hand, I also argue that unaccompanied minors were grouped together and framed from a very problem-oriented point of view. What is furthermore interesting is how the teachers react and talk about their own pedagogical work with unaccompanied minors given these problematizations.

EMMA: So we work to diminish their expectations ... but some students ... those who have moved on from here, they are so eager to work and work and work, so the students who are downstairs attending what we call the introduction program, the individual alternative (*introduktionsprogram individuellt alternativ*), they study like crazy. In order to enroll in upper secondary education this year, (authorities) want (students) to pass in at least eight subjects now, and then (teachers) have a great challenge in order to tell (students) that you might need to stay here two more years in order to make it. That's really hard (for the students) to

understand. (Group interview with teachers from an upper secondary school in a rural municipality 111124 page 14f)

MARGARETA: It's partly because you have to learn an academic language in order to study at college level. (It) can take up to 15 years, so if you have the expectancy to become physicians and lawyers, at some point someone has to tell them that this will take time. In the beginning you do not understand this and your eyes open to the fact that this takes time and that is when there's a risk of falling (down).

(Group interview with preparatory upper secondary school in Gothenburg 111102 page 3)

Given how the teachers and pedagogues discuss unaccompanied minors' disadvantaged position, they often stress how they consequently work to diminish the expectations of their students in order to help them learn how to look more realistically at their prospects. In Emma's (a teacher) quote above some of the unaccompanied minors are narrated as extremely eager to achieve in school (accentuated by how she stresses and repeats the word "work"), that it is hard for her and her colleagues to make "them" fully understand the challenges ahead. According to Margareta (a teacher), it can take a long time to acquire the language skills necessary to enroll in a university/college program, yet she understands that the unaccompanied minors harbor expectations of becoming highly qualified and working in high status professions, hence indicating that "they" have a long way to go. In Margareta's narration "someone" (passive generalization) is constructed as the person who needs to inform the preparatory students of their disadvantage, but also offer the unaccompanied minors support when this realization finally hits them.

Learning to look more realistically at one's prospects is narrated as the act of lowering the expectations of unaccompanied minors. What is clear in the two interview extracts above is that teachers experience walking a tightrope between what, for instance, Emma phrases as "diminish their expectations" and what Margareta formulates as students needing to have their "eyes open" to the fact that advancing in the Swedish school system takes time. Evident in both narratives is how it is the teacher that intrinsically becomes the one who raises the preparatory students' self-awareness with regard to their ordeal and work to lower their expectations.

According to Margareta, unaccompanied children also risk "falling (down)" or giving up on their future aspirations when they are confronted with these hard facts. The narrative outlining the importance of understanding that advancing in the school system takes time is also interesting when compared to the view that moving quickly from the introductory unit to a

national program or non-introductory education was deemed desirable in a previous quote from Margareta (Chapter 6, section 6.3.1). Lundqvist (2010) emphasizes that even though migrant children are often found to be more school motivated in comparison to their Swedish-born peers, they still tend to be underrepresented in postsecondary education. One wonders whether lowering one's expectations is somewhat incommensurable to making someone stay motivated?

ULLA: Of course we may have to force and motivate them in order to remain here, to get the foundation in order to then go out and join the workforce, but they have no interest in academic studies. (They want) to make a living, earn money.

(Group interview with preparatory upper secondary school in Gothenburg 111102 page 27)

At other times, the teachers explain that their unaccompanied students as a group are less inclined to become academically prosperous, as they are also framed as lacking “interest in academic studies” (i.e., no motivation). In Ulla's extract, working with unaccompanied minors demands a “carrot and stick approach” in order to make unaccompanied minors and preparatory students endure as they are constructed by her as more eager to quit school, get a job and earn money.

Although the teachers link the students' former lack of schooling to structural factors there is also a tendency to narrate them as inherently different due to their ordeal (a process of “othering”) . Evident in some interviews is the perception that unaccompanied minors are subjects in need of specific training to compensate for their shortcomings.

LENNART: Of course we bring up that in our country it's important to think critically, why you do this and that, that you are expected to explain, analyze, and so on. That's what's so typical about our school system and (in order to do this) one needs to practice.

(Group interview with teachers from an upper secondary school in a rural municipality 111125 page 3)

STINA: Though you do not have the basics, you are expected to learn the subject at a level that corresponds to the ninth level, and then as a teacher you are to try to fill all the cavities. And if it's a small hole maybe it will work, but when it's like a huge gap, a nothing, then ...

LENA: No, if one doesn't know what north and south is, then it is hard to start reading geography level nine.

(Group interview with teachers from an upper secondary school in an urban municipality 120221 page 3)

Above, Lennart explains that it is the ability to think critically and analyze that is a cornerstone of both the Swedish way (“our country”) and the Swedish school system. The newly arrived students and the unaccompanied minors on the contrary are constructed as in need of extra practice in order to obtain such abilities. Lennart’s extract also highlights a tendency amongst many of the interviewed teachers and pedagogues — when talking about didactics and methods with regard to newly arrived migrant children in general and unaccompanied minors specifically — to focus on the children’s shortcomings (rather than their possible capabilities), thus emphasizing the need to somehow compensate for their deficits. According to Stina and Lena (teachers), working with unaccompanied minors involves filling the “cavities” in their knowledge base. What is also clear in their extracts is that such conduct is conceived as nearly impossible, as the cavities are more likely to be knowledge “gaps” (or “a nothing”), hence making the unaccompanied student a mismatch to the Swedish school system and other students of their same age. All three of the above extracts make it clear that the teachers focus on knowledge gaps, and that lack of training risks constructing the unaccompanied minor as different or even inferior to their Swedish-born peers.

LOUISA: I think we have this very clear mandate or very clear mission to create learning conditions and for filling up with Swedish.

(Group interview with teachers from an preparatory upper secondary school in a rural municipality 111124 page 18.)

ULLA: We are at that particular school in the (Urban City) education system, it means that we are the introductory school unit and this is where you come when you have no other language skills whatsoever.

LIVE: Any Swedish language?

ULLA: Any Swedish language, yes. (Laughs) Obviously I meant Swedish.

(Group interview with preparatory upper-secondary school in Urban municipality 111102 page 2)

In Louisa and Ulla’s extract, but also in the dialogue between Stina and Lena, unaccompanied minors are expressed as passive “*tabula rasa*’s”, just waiting to be filled to capacity by the new knowledge or language preparation given to them in the introductory classrooms. For Louisa the main task of the preparatory classes is to “create learning conditions”, to somehow compensate for the previous absence of schooling in the preparatory students’ lives. The Swedish language is considered a norm, which is enhanced by how Ulla states that their school is for those who have “no other language skills

whatsoever” (a statement that Ulla later rephrases when asked to specify her point of view). The status of the Swedish language is also emphasized in Louisa’s quote, as “filling up with Swedish” is described as one of the most important didactic tasks of introductory pedagogics. These two interview extracts point to other research findings that stress how migrants’ knowledge of native languages are often constructed as important facilitators in order to acquire Swedish but rarely are accounted for as potential knowledge assets (see e.g., Torpsten 2012; Bunar 2010; Lunneblad and Asplund Carlsson 2009). What is interesting is how unaccompanied minor students concurrently are put to the fore as empty jars in need of a good educational filling.

Unaccompanied minors are articulated as examples of disadvantaged children when compared to their peers of the same age, and success or achievement (i.e., moving quickly into a national program or qualify for higher education) are narrated as rather unlikely for them, as I demonstrate in Chapter 6, section 6.3.1. Implicit in the teachers and pedagogues’ quotes in this chapter is that the success or possible failures of unaccompanied minors in the Swedish introductory class are constructed as related to the unaccompanied children and youngsters’ lack of former educational training. Some teachers highlight how the introductory students and unaccompanied minors risk being positioned as underdogs by the Swedish school system. Such a construction was, for example, articulated in Maylis’s (a teacher) quote in Chapter 6, section 6.3.1. Still, the teachers rarely frame the unaccompanied minors’ difficulties as a failure of the introductory school system. The practice of doing difference in regards to unaccompanied minors is often underscored as legitimate given the construction of them as different from other children or the specific situation they are in.

KARIN: Yes, and the fact that our students don’t have (computers like the other students have) ... one can (find) that (a bit unfair)... but the other students are enrolled (in this school) for three years and our students ... it’s a little like one never knows.

(Group interview with upper secondary school teachers in an urban municipality 120221 page 8)

In Karin’s (a teacher) extract she highlights an example of how preparatory students are being treated differently when computers are distributed to the other students in her school. The school practice involves diverse conduct (doing difference) with regard to the preparatory students in comparison to their Swedish-born peers: when all students were assigned school computers the preparatory students were left without. On the one hand, this practice is perceived as somewhat ambivalent, as Karin describes this as a little upset-

ting or unfair (accentuated by how she pauses when she talks), but on the other hand she also constructs this as legitimate due to the fact that “one” (passive generalization) never really knows when the unaccompanied minors drops out of school (i.e., moves to another school, enrolls in a different program). By stating that “one never knows”, Karin also connects the practice of doing difference as legitimate due to the uncertainty of unaccompanied minors presence or endurance in school or as an example of what I (in Chapter 6, section 6.2.1) highlighted as “working with uncertainty”: Working with uncertainty pointed to how the asylum process were constructed as affecting unaccompanied children and minors, or how different unaccompanied children’s juridical status, could influence the group dynamics in the classroom.

In the interviews conducted with teachers and pedagogues, it was evident that the preparatory students’ diverse backgrounds were validated and judged according to how teachers, special teachers and school counsellors perceived their level of previous academic achievements. Dividing the preparatory students into tutorial sub-groups or streams according to their educational backgrounds and language skills are hence considered key to this work.

LENNART: Earlier on they came directly to us, but as of this year they will now enter (upper secondary school) tied to Adult Education and SFI (Swedish For immigrants) first. So they deal with the initial introduction there and they go there for a couple of weeks to be screened, to see if, for example, they need to attend an illiteracy group or a group learning the Latin alphabet (“latinisering”) ... then they are to learn a little basic Swedish to enable them to come here to us, so we’ve get new students coming gradually throughout of the school year. Today, this week, for example, there was one student; next week there will be another one.

(Group interview with teachers from an upper secondary school in rural municipality 111125 page 4)

This work involves singling out the illiterate from the literate students and those who already read and write the Latin alphabet from those who understand other alphabets. In Lennart’s (a teacher) quote this process is described as a kind of school machinery working to map and screen the newcomers. Preparatory or introductory education works as a stratifying tool creating divisions or sub-groups between the preparatory students. Correspondingly, this process also singles out the preparatory students from the overall students in the different secondary or upper secondary schools interviewed, or the preparatory migrant children and youngsters from the Swedish-born.

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MARIANNE: Yes the students want to. For example, now, just a moment ago, I was asked by some of my students who said, “Can’t we have (physical education) with the Swedish students?” And some years ago we had that, it has worked, that you were able to organize it like that. Then today my response to this student was, “Yes, of course, I’m going to pass it on, but now when you are so many in that class it can be difficult to manage”. ... One needs many physical education teachers at the same time. It’s quite a big process then to make the scheduling work and all the various programs and groups and so on. So unfortunately it is this part then that it (stands and) falls on.

(Group interview with upper secondary school teachers in rural municipal 111125 page 10f)

MARTA: And then they’re not let out in all subjects. You try ... testing them in arts, physical education and music, where it is easier for them to get in. ... When I’ve talked to the students, they believe that it’s very exciting to belong (to a class).

(Group interview with teachers at a secondary school in rural municipality 111118 page 3)

According to Marianne, introductory students are often eager (“the students want to”) to socialize with the Swedish-born students in their school. She explains how her students are enthusiastic to participate in gymnastics with the Swedish students. In Marianne’s extract this is also narrated as “difficult to manage” due to the overall organization of the school (“scheduling”), the influx of preparatory students (“you are so many in the class”) and a lack of pedagogical resources (“one needs many physical education teachers”).

As gymnastics constitutes part of what the teachers often refer to as “practical or esthetical subjects” (often constructed as essentially different to theoretical subjects) or “easier” in Marta’s quote, some schools have developed a practice of including the preparatory students in some esthetical and/or practical classes together with Swedish-born student of the same age. According to Marta, this practice is appreciated by the preparatory students, who are constructed as excited to belong. Interesting in this regard is how she narrates this as the act of letting the preparatory students “out” of the preparatory classroom and “in” a regular class of students of the same age. Albeit the two teachers narrate rather distinct school practices, what is interesting is how the preparatory class is distinguished from the Swedish class in talk and in practice.

The fact that the preparatory classroom acts as a segregated space in Swedish schools is a finding supported by other research (Cf. Kamali 2005; Bunar 2010). What is interesting with reference to the interviews conducted here are how teachers and pedagogues tend to narrate the preparatory and/or late arriving students as constituting a kind of mismatch to the Swedish

school system. Children are expected to start school at the age of 6 and then gradually proceed from 0 until 9th grade, later to advance to upper secondary school and then maybe even enroll in either college or university studies after graduation. The preparatory students seem to somewhat violate the “natural order” of the school system as they are understood as dropping in or dropping out at odd hours (and not when school starts after the summer holidays or after graduation).

What becomes clear in the teachers’ narrations is that although the students’ lack of academic prosperity is put to the fore as a consequence of their former lack of schooling (i.e., structural factors), their eventual success is often narrated as a consequence of either inner motivation or drive. When compared to the understanding of determined youth (section 7.1.2) and as individual exceptions, there is the likelihood that the introductory or preparatory school program’s structural role in the academic failure amid success amongst unaccompanied minors is rendered invisible (Cf. Johansson 2012:92 f; Johansson and Lunneblad 2012).

There is also an understanding that the teachers’ view of unaccompanied children as essentially different from Swedish students risks them being made “guilty by association”, as their lack of schooling is seen as caused by structural factors yet their lack of formal training risks framing them as subjects less likely to think critically or harbor any academic interest. According to Runfors (2003), teachers in Swedish schools tend to construct migrant children as “different children” by focusing on their shortcomings, endangering a homogenization of a rather heterogenous group of students. The preparatory students’ backgrounds are seen as flawed or inadequate compared to the norm, which is inherently measured by what is intrinsically highlighted as the normalized Swedish students (see e.g., Bunar 2010; Gruber 2007/2008).

7.1.2 Compensatory strategies

The importance of somehow offering support to compensate for or overcome the perceived shortcomings of unaccompanied minors and their peers was often highlighted with reference to both their supposed insufficient academic training and in order to shape their social behavior in specific and wanted directions. Compensating for a perceived lack of knowledge of Swedish norms and values was constructed as an important part of the pedagogical conduct that the teachers highlighted when describing their work with unaccompanied minors and youngsters.

7.1.2.1 Teaching unaccompanied boys and girls how to get about in Sweden

In Chapter 6, section 6.3.3, I emphasize how unaccompanied minors were often constructed as an Afghan or Muslim young man or boy with limited knowledge of Swedish society. Although most officials and support staff narrated the unaccompanied minor as intrinsically a boy, the subject was sometimes also underlined as a girl. Most often this was done with regard to a narrative of the Somali girl, essentially different from Swedish girls and women. These conceptualizations rendered the unaccompanied boy and girl as rather problematic subjects. In the following section, I examine some everyday practices or strategies deemed legitimate and even necessary given these conceptualizations.

MARYAN: And I try to help them with what they think is right and good. Obligations, rights, I try to help them. ... In my country or in other countries they hold each other, it's a lot of intimacy (between) buddies, friends who have not met in a long time; they are holding each other's hands ... but if they do that here in Sweden people assume they're gay! (Laughs)

(Group interview with teachers from an upper secondary school in a rural municipality 111125 page 2f)

For Maryan (a teacher) it is the custom or habit of two male friends holding hands that is addressed. The narration has to do with Maryan acting on behalf of the youngsters and children in order to make them perform and behave according to her ideas of Swedish norms and standards ("I try to help them with what they think is right and good"). Intrinsic in what she articulates as a need to shape how unaccompanied boys behave toward other boys is also an evaluation of the youngsters' sexuality. Maryan is eager to shape the behavior of the unaccompanied minors so they will not risk being positioned as gay highlights the rather narrow space in which she as a teacher distinguishes what is the expected, respectable and wanted behavior from what could be framed as non-respectable (risking being positioned as gay) behavior.

FADI: For example, the companionship of girls, if you're going to have girlfriends (or not), how to behave toward girls, how you should behave. (Swedish girls) do not have the same culture that the Afghan girls have, for example. Also (unaccompanied boys) need to learn that (Swedish girls) have freedom but not the kind of freedom (unaccompanied boys) assume that a woman should have here in Sweden. It has limits too, that's what we try to teach

them. You have limits too. It's freedom and you can have girlfriends up to some boundary. We, all the staff, try to say that boundaries also exist; it's not like you think. All the time they say; "I have my freedom, what should one do to girls in order to catch girls?" They are taught that this isn't what they believe.

(Group interview with HVB staff 111026 page 9)

According to Fadi (HVB staff member), the lack of Swedish know-how makes unaccompanied minor boys the target group of dialogue and strategies aiming to teach them how to interact with Swedish girls or whether or not to have girlfriends. In Chapter 6, section 6.3.3, Fadi's extract builds on the understanding that Swedish women are constructed as a binary opposition to Afghan or Muslim women, but also as essentially different from unaccompanied boys. The unaccompanied boys are also intrinsically constructed as having a heterosexual interest in the Swedish girls, but also as having a somewhat uncontrolled or potentially harmful sexuality. The unaccompanied boy that Fadi talks about is seen at the same time as lacking vital knowledge of what living in (what is intrinsically put to the fore as) a liberated society (i.e., Sweden) implies. In Fadi's narrative this involves instructing unaccompanied boys how to behave and how to coexist with Swedish women. For him the words "boundary" and "boundaries", "limits" and "freedom" are repeated, implying that what is constructed as the unaccompanied boys' understanding of sexuality and liberated Swedish girls are misleading. Sexual freedom in Fadi's construction is circumscribed and restricted, and is a practice unaccompanied minor boys need to be taught.

Maryan and Fadi's narratives are interesting in that unaccompanied boys are constructed as essentially heterosexual, consequently excluding them from other possible sexualities. According to Hammarén (2008), the connotations that being an immigrant boy gives function as a "heterosexual cover-up" in such a way that people rarely assume that they could ever express or constitute other sexualities and/or desires other than heterosexuality. The heterosexuality of the immigrant boy is also accentuated as problematic and hence a target for action (Cf. Elmeroth 2008; 2012).

In Chapter 6, section 6.3.3, I highlight how the unaccompanied child subject when and if constructed as a girl is also the target of compensatory tactics aiming to adjust her behavior in desirable ways. In the following section, I analyze two quotes wherein the narratives describe a construction were unaccompanied girls are accentuated as in risk of becoming teen mothers.

ELISABETH: No, you don't want to have a lot of babies when you're 18 because then you'll go to school. You should learn Swedish, because if you get married and have children

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you will never learn Swedish, you will never get into the Swedish society, you will miss out on so much. You can do this when you're in your 30s. "But then I am already, I am already a grandmother, I am too old when I'm 30". They have it wrong ... I will not say they have the wrong angle, they've got their Somali viewpoint, I want to erase it a little bit because the way they perceive themselves and the Somali view of humanity isn't consistent to how we perceive human beings in Sweden. And I want them to be as rich as ... they can have two worlds but they need to know about the world here in Sweden, how we see humanity. Most often they find it to be the right one in the end. "Of course I have to educate myself", maybe (they) don't say that it was fortunate that you said I shouldn't have a baby when I was 18, but 25, 26, 27. "I have learnt to speak Swedish, have attended the assistant nurse or child-care worker (program)". It's the two professions they usually choose. And then they say, "Yes, of course I have to get myself a job, I have to pay my rent, the social service cannot pay my rent all my life". Girls are so much eager to get a job, want to learn the language, want to get a job. While (Somali) boys just lie back (thinking) she'll fix it.

(Single interview with custodian 111212 page 23)

In Elisabeth's (a custodian) quote she retells a discussion she had with a Somali girl that she has in her custody. According to her rationale this particular girl's aspiration of becoming a young mother is an example of what Elisabeth constructs as the Somali outlook ("Somali view of humanity"), which is brought forward as opposing what she emphasizes as how "we see this in Sweden" or "how we perceive human beings in Sweden". In the plural form use Elisabeth also generalizes her claim as representing two contrasting communities of equally thinking Swedes ("us") versus Somalis' ("they" or "their"). In her construction the Somali outlook is characterized by girls being too family-oriented, having children at too early an age and as a result neglecting their education, but also by lazy Somali men who let Somali women do all the work ("the (Somali) boys lie back (thinking) she'll fix it"). This "outlook" is constructed as making it harder for the young Somali gaining entrance to the Swedish society and Swedishness. According to Elisabeth's narration, the Somali girl risks exclusion from Swedish community, becoming a burden to this society by not being able to provide for herself and her offspring. In the quote the act of paying one's own rent, finding a job and learning to speak Swedish is emphasized as a moral obligation. The Somali woman is moreover highlighted as more eager to adjust to Swedishness than the Somali man. This also accentuates the Somali girl as the target of a cultural education that Elisabeth comes to justify as she constructs the girl as eventually endorsing the Swedish way (as she is constructed as seeing this as the correct and respectable one for the future). This conceptualization is mirrored by the construction of the Somali girl in Chapter 6, section 6.3.3 as

associated to a traditional, submissive and loyal femininity. The Somali girl should (moral obligation) choose education and paid work over having too many babies too early and risk becoming a burden on the Swedish welfare system. Interesting in this regard is, for instance, how Elisabeth frames it as respectable for the Somali girl to make a living as an assistant nurse or a childcare assistant as long as these traditional female and low-wage endeavors are practiced as paid work. Elisabeth positions herself as the actor that liberates the unaccompanied girl from her traditional positioning (Cf. Mohanty 1999; de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005; Wickström 2007).

MARIE: “But how were you thinking”, the school nurse said ... “you’re only 18 years old, you’re not even done with the introductory part, how then to support a child? How are you thinking?” “Yes I do need to get my life in order now, I must get this settled”. And later on the school nurse and I discussed whether they have a picture saying if you just have a baby everything will just work out for you because you will get a flat and then you’ll have support, that no one can take away from you because you have the baby. And I don’t mean that they’re conniving, but they are so vulnerable, so alone, without any network. They were often brought up in large family networks, for example where people know each other. It’s clear that one grabs every straw in order to try to bring order to one’s life. And in these cases they have met men, who have certainly not been able to support them in any ways either.

(Single interview with upper secondary school curator 120328 page 5)

Albeit Marie (a school curator) narrates her conceptualization a bit differently, the fear of the unaccompanied girl becoming pregnant too early and hence becoming a teenage mom also constitutes a core part of her narrative. Marie argues that it is the position of being unaccompanied and lacking close and enduring relationships (“so alone, without any network”, “so vulnerable”) that make the unaccompanied girl decide to become pregnant. In Marie’s construction the unaccompanied girl has a false image and believes that everything (support, housing, etc.) will come together when the baby is born. This is concurrently not emphasized as calculating or strategic — and/or as a sign of possible laziness as in Elisabeth’s narrative — but a result of the unaccompanied girl having a desperate, yet naïve and simplistic understanding of the Swedish system. (Since the unaccompanied girl is also narrated as accustomed to large networks of extended family members, the baby becomes a possible means for her to achieve a family network in the Swedish context). Similar to the construction Elisabeth highlights, the men that these girls are likely to encounter are not perceived as able to support them or their babies. And analogous to Elisabeth’s conduct (and in some ways to the teachers in the previous section that were eager to lower the expectations of

unaccompanied minors with regard to their school performance), Marie frames it as vital to question the unaccompanied girl's decision and inform her about the hard facts (i.e., not being able to support herself, the baby, etc.): "how then to support a child? How are you thinking?"

McRobbie (2007) notes that having a well-planned life has become a feminine requirement in neoliberal Western democracy. Planned parenthood is also constructed and highlighted as imperative in order to avoid early maternity, state dependency and become economically self-sufficient. Girls and women are hence paradoxically harshly governed in order to achieve the desired self-reliance and independence expected of them, as obtaining the ideal womanhood involves constant self-regulation and self-monitoring (Ibid: 701. Cf Rose 1999; Miller and Rose 2008). People in marginalized positions such as unaccompanied minors represented here seem even more likely to become the target of such governing strategies. Evident in the narratives from Elisabeth and Marie is also the classical image of the third world woman accentuated as either a poor or suppressed sufferer or as an uncontrolled "child bearing machine". A positioning that corresponds to the monolithic construction of the third world woman, which Spivak (1999) talks about, constructed as a binary opposition to the assumed liberated white femininity. This also points to the interpretative privilege that the custodian and curator give themselves amid the young girls they talk about: as professionals and adults (positioned as older and wiser due to age and/or maturity) and middle-class women, but also possibly as examples of the white Western woman amidst the third world woman (Amos and Parmar 2011, 2013; Wikström 2009).

In some of McRobbie's (2000) earlier work, she studied how having a baby at an early age could be re-conceptualized as a well-considered and even rational decision from the teenage mother's point of view. In McRobbie's study, British working-class girls and young women found young parenthood to be one of very few respectable options available in order to be treated as an adult (i.e., self-sufficient and independent) in the views of other people.⁸⁴ Similar findings are also highlighted in Amos and Parmar (1981/2013) with regard to black working-class girls' experiences in the British context. McRobbie (2000; 2007) and Amos and Parmar (1981/2013) are therefore highly critical of a societal perspective, where young and single and black and/or, as in my study, migrant mothers are put to the fore as constituting a specific social problem. Instead, society's focus should be on how to create supportive structures (e.g., child care services, housing, etc.) that enable young women to take care of their toddlers while

⁸⁴ McRobbie (2000) also emphasizes that the experience of mutual love and attachment to the baby is often conceived as meaningful and reinforcing to the young mothers.

pursuing further education (Cf. McRobbie 2000; Amos and Parmar 1981/2013).

7.1.2.2 Becoming independent

Another compensating strategy that was accentuated by HVB staff when they talked about the most important part of their daily work with unaccompanied children and youngsters was the need to teach them how to become self-reliant and independent.

ALEXANDER: So, how the Swedish society works, that's what we try to teach them at the group home. Teaching them all this ... socially useful information on what to know. ... They're supposed to get up by themselves, they're supposed to manage the school thing by themselves as well, then they have contact persons in the group home that support them when handling various problems that might arise. For the most part, we try to teach them to be as independent as they can be, but as I said, it is very individually, and that we have to be sensitive to.

(Group interview with HVB staff, 110914 page 10)

According to Alexander (HVB staff member), one of the main features of his work involves providing them with social information on all the things to know in Sweden. Corresponding to the articulation of unaccompanied minors as children with educational deficits, or the knowledge gaps that the teachers Stina and Lena talk about in Chapter 6, section 6.1.1, it is often mentioned as quintessential to counteract the unaccompanied children and youngsters' lack of what is put to the fore as vital social knowledge. Similarly, Alexander stresses the importance of making them as "independent as they can be" by teaching them how to keep track of time, cook and clean.

SABEEN (*boendepersonal*): What we give them is a starter kit so they can take a shower and get some rest afterwards, sanitary articles, and then we check the weather as well. If it is wintertime they get jackets, hats, scarves, mittens, underwear, shoes, it depends. Some come in with absolutely nothing, just the clothes that they wear. Then when they get settled then we teach them how we clean, so they can learn how to clean, because not everyone has cleaned their home in their home country. For example, they cannot clean toilets, because they haven't had a toilet before. That's the fundamental thing, routines, how things work here in the group home, rules and all of that.

(Group interview with HVB staff, 110914 page 16)

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According to Alexander's co-worker Sabeen, it is important for her HVB facility to meet up with or cater to newly arrived unaccompanied children or youngsters' basic needs. Equally important is that they should not get used to being idle. Instead, unaccompanied minors are immediately expected to participate in common household chores. In the quote above Sabeen describes this as an important part of the knowhow that the HVB facility provides, as "not everyone has cleaned their home in their home country". (In her narration the act of toilet cleaning that is accentuated as an important example of what to instruct the unaccompanied minors). Teachers Marianne and Lennart emphasize similar aspects:

MARIANNE: Of course, the very first step is that they need to learn how to cook, because they'll have to fend for themselves, as I see it. And then the next step ...

LENNART: Too (learn how to) clean, hygiene ...

(Group interview with upper secondary school teachers in rural municipal 111125 page 3)

In their construction the "first step" is to teach unaccompanied minors how to cook, clean and then (other) hygienic activities. This is narrated as becoming self-sufficient, as unaccompanied minors (according to Marianne's rationale) must learn to care for themselves.

EVA-LENA: For them a regular day starts (school) 9:30 and ends at 3-4, a bit differently, as the boys are responsible for making food during the weekdays, five days a week now, and then the staff (prepare food) two days a week, so that if it's a food day then he comes home (earlier) to prepare. We have decided then (what to eat), we have house meetings or Tuesday meetings, when we decide the menu for the next week.

(Group interviews with staff from three different HVB facilities 110615 page 6)

When Eva-Lena gives a short description of the everyday at the HVB facility where she works, the highlighted routines mirror the ones articulated by Sabeen and Alexander.

In the narratives of HVB staff children or youngsters appear expected or required to participate in the cooking or cleaning at fixed times (although they might be given some individual space or extra free leisure time during the weekends, Stretmo and Melander 2013). The common activities seem to be designed to steer children or youngsters away from possible inactivity or idleness. They are often quickly enrolled in school, sometimes as soon as the day after arrival (Stretmo and Melander 2013: 171ff). The HVB staff describe this practice as an important part of normalizing the daily activities of the newly arrived unaccompanied minors. This is sometimes accentuated as a

mean to enhance the well-being of children and youngsters living in uncertainty (Ibid). Planning and structuring are also constructed as core parts of the social orientation that some of the HVB staff stress as important to communicate to unaccompanied minors. To keep track of time but also economize and cook, clean and wash are other activities considered quintessential and part of becoming independent.

I argue that what is also being communicated through these distinct actions is that unaccompanied children and youngsters are expected to participate in joint cleaning and cooking activities, because they are obliged to offer services in return (*quid pro quo*) for those given (or those that are sometimes narrated as “offered”) to them. Hagelund (2005) stresses how, for instance, in the official Norwegian reception refugees are expected to contribute in order to receive official contribution from the state.⁸⁵ This is something I analyze in section 7.2.1. Central to this construction is the conceptualization of unaccompanied minors as different and this difference legitimizes specific measures. In the next section, I discuss how this prerequisite for making a difference when handling unaccompanied minors is articulated and legitimized.

7.1.3 Adopting novel measures in order to target a different group

As I argue in Chapter 6, unaccompanied minors were articulated as diverse from Swedish-born children and youngsters, but also as children with different experiences. The focus on difference was also emphasized in public and official understandings of unaccompanied minors, where specific ethnic and gendered traits were conceptualized in relation to a typology of risk when discussing the social problem of missing unaccompanied children and how best to deal with this problem (in the Swedish media 2000-2005, and in both Norwegian and Swedish newspaper articles between 2005-2008). In policy the problematization of missings could also be analyzed as gendered, as problematic asylum behavior implicitly tends to be associated with absconding boys and the problem of involuntary missings is connected to girls.

⁸⁵ This mode of conduct is visible in how asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants who are the recipients of financial support from the Norwegian state must either actively participate in induction programs with emphasis on Norwegian language training. Absence from the introduction program is punished by recessed funds (Hagelund 2005).

Interesting in this context is that if migrants choose to work instead of taking the introductory course this does not affect the newcomers' level of contribution.

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When the caregivers made these differences in talk they were sometimes articulated as a problem of incongruence constructing a potential political challenge to the Swedish society as a whole. Yet, the consequences were emphasized as directly affecting the municipal social services, HVB staff or the preparatory classroom, thus making officials and support staff stress the necessity of creating novel methods or measures when handling and receiving them:

MARGARETA: So they stay with us for a year and I think that's justifiable because it's (an introductory unit), but they can't remain in this system for four years and they might have had only three years of elementary schooling. They have been in a preparatory class during their seventh, eighth and ninth grade, and as they continue in this system they have spent seven years in some kind of language introduction. We need to open up. You have to open up the school system and you have to open the labor market, and there must be an understanding that ... they are fully competent people, smart, driven. They have made their way here, they are amazing people who come here.

(Group interview with preparatory upper secondary school in Gothenburg 111102 page 26)

BIRGITTA: One might think everything feels good and then the next day something happens that makes you (go) "shucks". So what we did during the spring, one of my colleagues and I, it was to start up a small group for the (foster) families that have unaccompanied refugee children so that we can get together, just us, and talk about the specific problems that may arise in connection to these kids.

(Group interview with HVB staff 110615 page 8)

In the quote above Margareta highlights the importance of offering unaccompanied minors (or other late arriving students) different paths in order to get either the needed qualifications or access to the Swedish labor market. She also emphasizes the importance of "opening up" society and the school system in order for introductory students to integrate in Sweden. In her extract, unaccompanied minors are put to the fore as disadvantaged (Cf. some of the quotes made by Margareta in the previous parts of this chapter), but also as "competent people, smart, driven" ("They have made their way here") and "amazing people" waiting to be included and integrated into Swedish society (that consequently needs to "open up"). According to Torpsten (2012), a focus on the deficiencies of introductory students can operate simultaneously amid rather positive evaluations of them (Cf. Chapter 7.1.1).

In Birgitta's (supervisor with HVB and foster families) quote, she highlights the importance of exclusive meetings for foster families involved in the reception of unaccompanied minors with regard to "specific problems that

may arise in connection to these kids”. This is legitimized in Birgitta’s extract, as handling unaccompanied minors is underscored as working with uncertainty: “One might think everything feels good and then the next day something happens that makes you (go) “shucks””.

INGEGERD: It should be fair and not dependent on whether or not you have a custodian who may be able to (fix things)... it’s supposed to be the same for everyone. And it creates so much conflict in the group homes, so much tension so it’s completely ...

MONA: Similarly, I think it’s insanely stupid of (HVB) to mix asylum seekers and “PUT children”.⁸⁶

CHARLOTTE: Well how do you view it? Because this is something that has come up, I think, in other interviews with different groups ... how to you think about it? What should one do?

MONA: You should have two separate houses, two different premises where they can live. (Group interview with custodians 111202 page 5)

In the dialogue above, two custodians highlight corresponding constructions of the practice of placing children and youngsters in different stages of their asylum process (“asylum seekers” and “PUT children”) in the same HVB facility. In section 7.2, I highlight how the asylum process was underlined as a time and space, articulated as causing stress and agony for unaccompanied minors (living in uncertainty) associated to the act of officials and support staff working with uncertainty. A solution to the problem of unaccompanied children and youngsters having different legal status, as argued by Mona, is to separate the children who have obtained a permanent residence permit from the asylum seeking and/or rejected children (detached housings). This process is underscored as legitimate given the unfairness of the children’s distinct legal status and of some children having a custodian willing to fight for their benefit. In order to target unequal positions and avoid conflicts and discussions, unaccompanied children and youngsters should be kept apart. This could be analyzed as a process of exclusion where the act of making a difference is legitimized due to children’s distinctive status as either permanent or temporary residents (Back 1996 and the new face of racism. Cf. Molina 2006; Shina et al. 2008).

KARL: Many have been in a very bad state, which of course pretty much comes to affect how the whole work around them appears ... I feel that it has been rather difficult perhaps to conduct an investigation in that methodical and well, what can I say, structured fashion you

⁸⁶ PUT is short for permanent residence permit/permanent (*uppehållstillstånd*). PUT child/children are hence referring to children and youngsters who have obtained a permanent residence permit.

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usually have the objective to do. You might dig into their backgrounds, what kind of backgrounds that the child or youngster carries with them and so on. But certain bits and pieces have often felt too difficult or perhaps even irrelevant to talk about in that situation. Sometimes it's all been very focused on the current emotional state and kind of how "I'm feeling today", and so on.

(Single interview with social worker 120224 page 3)

Karl's (a social worker) quote connects to the understanding that working with uncertainty implies working with novel measures. According to him it is a difficulty or a challenge to conduct textbook psychosocial work when unaccompanied minors are in a bad mental state. These circumstances justify (or at least validate) that some standard operating schemes are put aside. Instead of mapping or digging into the children's pasts, focus consequently tends to dwell on the here and now. Karl expresses some ambivalence with regard to his strategy ("I feel that it has been rather difficult"), but the approach as such is presented as a mere consequence of the children's unstable life situations.

One possible analysis of Karl's quote could also be that the poor mental health status of unaccompanied minors can legitimize avoidant approaches or strategies from officials and support staff. Asking too many questions is sometimes explained as a possible cause of distress to the unaccompanied child and hence deemed as an irrelevant method (Cf. Kohli 2006, 2007; Malmsten 2012; Backlund et al. 2012). It remains a wonder whether such interpretations also inherently protect those working with unaccompanied children from being confronted with information or experiences that officials and support staff might find tough and or even problematic to handle. According to Kohli (2006; 2007) and Backlund et al. (2012), avoidant strategies are often practiced by, for instance, social workers in order to circumvent possibly re-traumatizing unaccompanied children, but also as a strategy to side-step a situation where social workers are confronted or consequently have to deal with overly-sensitive information given by children and youngsters.

There is a tendency in the quotes narrated here that officials and support staff see unaccompanied minors as so affected by the situational factors they experience (living in uncertainty and being separated from parents) that they nearly constitute a specific part of their very beings (Cf. Wernesjö 2011, 2014). When children and youngsters are conceptualized as ambivalent sufferers in a state of emergency, constructing specific or exclusive measures for them is deemed legitimate.

FRIDA: But there are a lot of advantages living in a kinship foster family too, because I'm a bit allergic to the fact that one should assess everyone as it is a case of a Swedish child who was to be taken from its family, that one must have the same ... not that they shouldn't have the same rights, because it's very easy to make it all black or white ... you need to develop methods in order to support these families with more education and support and clearer routines regarding what should apply to them. Should you have your own room or is it okay to share a room and when is it ok? Yes, it needs more development, as the available methods aren't very good. (Group interview with social workers in urban municipality 111101 page 10)

Frida's (a social worker) narrative reflects on the benefits of maintaining kinship ties between an unaccompanied child and family members residing in Sweden when evaluating a possible kinship placement. According to her line of reasoning, social workers should reason a bit differently when taking over the custody of a Swedish child compared to an unaccompanied child. Fundamental to Frida's argumentation is that the profit of maintaining kinship ties outweighs the fact that many of the kinship families risk failing the cautious examination conducted by the social services. What becomes evident in her narration is that she constructs kinship families as distinctly opposing her idea of Swedish families risking having a child taken away from them by the social service. In this she also frames the unaccompanied child as somewhat different from a "Swedish child who was to be taken away from its family" (one might wonder whether her quote refers to average Swedish families in general or to Swedish families with a social service record specifically). For her social services should consequently adapt different guidelines when measuring the suitability of a kinship home. The importance of developing new and more specific methods is discussed as important. In her understanding there is something about blood ties that make the kinship family a better option for unaccompanied minors than for a Swedish-born child in similar situations. Without jeopardizing unaccompanied children's rights, social services should adopt flexibility with regard to how they measure or validate a placement in a kinship family. Frida's extract is also interesting to view amid the rather opposite construction made by Gudrun in section 7.3.2. What is important in Frida's articulation, also accentuated by Gudrun, is the importance of compensating for the possible disadvantages of kinship families by articulating novel and more appropriate and seemingly better routines when handling them. This perception is furthermore interesting to compare with the previous quote from the social worker Karl, specifically how he stressed the importance of doing social work with unaccompanied minors

differently due to their specific status as asylum seekers and the possible trauma that this might put on them.

MARTA: Well it depends on where you want to enroll (how many subjects the student needs to pass, in order to enroll in a upper secondary program). I think that feels very tough on our immigrants, I think they should have a little different path, they shouldn't have to (pass in 8 to 12 subjects).. well because they don't have ... the same prerequisites in order to cope. They can do it, maybe not right now, but later on, they need to have a few more years.

(Group interview with teachers from a secondary school in an rural municipality 111118 page 10)

Marta (a teacher) expresses similar concern with regard to unaccompanied minors and the school system. A scheme that requires students to pass in 8 to 12 core subjects before the age of 20 in order to proceed to one of the individual upper secondary school programs is way too tough on “our immigrants”, Marta states. Instead, she would like to see a path where the children and youngsters' lack of formal training is taken into account, where newly arrived children get extra time to learn Swedish and catch up in other subjects before applying to a upper secondary school program. According to Marta's rationale, newly arriving children in their teens should get a chance to “buy time” and hence be the subject of affirmative action serving to bridge the gap between them and Swedish-born students.

MARIANNE: Though the grades are there too ... you must have some fundament in order to cope with secondary education as well. It's not just to get in there, you must be able to manage there as well.

(Group interview with upper secondary school teachers in rural municipal 111125 page 15)

Other teachers like Marianne were equally concerned with the possible difficulties experienced by the students arriving Sweden in their late teens. Still, she does not want to see a system where the level of expected knowledge is lowered for the unaccompanied minors and other newly arrived students. Grades in such a construction are to be seen as licenses that ensure someone's readiness for education at the secondary level. According to her rationale, it would hence be potentially dangerous to create a system where performance could be evaluated differently, creating an easier path for students with less education versus a normal and implicitly more difficult path for Swedish-born students. Marianne underscores that such conduct risks making employers less inclined to hire individuals considered as having

taken the simpler route or give some students an easier or more unjust access to higher education. Therefore, not having the grades required is constructed as being less prepared for higher education. Both Martha and Marianne's narratives are similar to a more overall discussion concerning affirmative action or positive discrimination as tools in order to benefit the underrepresented or disadvantaged group in a different context. Positive discrimination of any kind is also constructed as a highly controversial and ambivalent strategy.

7.2 Between disciplining and caring strategies

In Chapter 6 and the previous part of this chapter, I argue that officials and support staff construct unaccompanied minors as a group in risk of social exclusion. In many ways this framing also positions the unaccompanied minor as a mismatch with the Swedish school system but also Swedish society.

ELISABETH: "Actually, even Swedish kids are standing in line to get a flat, you can't jump the queue!" "Yeah but they've said it." "Who said?" "The smuggler told me that you would get an apartment when you turn 18." "Yes, but I haven't I told you that the smuggler hasn't told you how it really is?" ... "You need to forget the word of the smuggler, they aren't true, that's not true. This of course you've seen for yourself when you got here. You'll have to fight, fight, fight, fight. You're supposed to study the SFI (Swedish For Immigrants) (level) A, B, C, D, then we'll study Swedish for immigrants, like on the beginners level." I mean they are 16, 17. "You might have finished upper secondary school and learned Swedish and maybe gotten an education when you're 28, 29 years". Then they say, "Oh my God, is it this hard?" "Yes, because you know no Swedish, you can't spell, you can't read, you don't know our rules, you can't ... This is when it all begins".

(Single interview with custodian 111212 page 10f)

The extract above is a re-telling of a conversation between Elisabeth (a custodian) and one of the children in her custody. Evident in her narration is an understanding of the possible hardship and setback unaccompanied minors are confronted with in Swedish society (underscored by how the word "fight" is repeated four times). Put to the fore is what Elisabeth describes as the unaccompanied minors' too unrealistic expectations of the Swedish system, but also how Elisabeth positions herself as the one who is to inform the unaccompanied minor about the hard facts of life. Elisabeth's narration corresponds to the conceptualization of unaccompanied minors as children with

specific shortcomings, but also how officials and support staff articulate their tasks with regard to unaccompanied minors.

One of the themes that I assume important in my theoretical passage (Chapter 2) is the relationship between control and regulative strategies and strategies that could be characterized as more care-oriented. In section 7.1, I provide many examples of what can be conceptualized as efforts aiming to change the conduct of unaccompanied minors in various ways, but also strategies that have been emphasized as legitimate measures taken by officials and support staff. In this section, I analyze two rather decisive and distinct ways to relate to unaccompanied children and youngsters, and connect them to the images of unaccompanied minors in Chapter 7, which are mainly strategies of controlling versus caring characters.

7.2.1 Control and discipline

In Chapter 6, I analyze how officials and support staff sometimes construct unaccompanied minors as traumatized sufferers in a state of emergency, and that this image connects to a narration where working with them implies working with uncertainty. In the previous section of this chapter, I emphasize how, for instance, social services understand it as appropriate to adopt novel measures, but also how HVB staff, foster parents and teachers see themselves and their work as important “entry training” in order for unaccompanied minors to learn how to get by in Sweden, compensating for their lack of Swedish social knowledge or schooling. At the same time, the fact that unaccompanied children and youngsters were constructed as having very different circumstances or settings made this work difficult in practice (Cf. Chapter 6.2.1).

In some narratives, quite similar to Elisabeth’s above, this construction furthermore led officials and support staff accentuating the need to foster or discipline the unaccompanied minors.

STINA: It has become very obvious that ... these kids come with a background ... that make our souls hurt. You get hurt and you want to be nice, but nice is not always not daring to set limits, because being kind is perhaps to put up these limits, to help them get adapted to the standards that apply here. That you respect their privacy and don’t intrude on them yet dare to put up limits and be a role model and not pity them. Surely, when someone is sad and cries you should be comforted, when you feel lonely and scared you should be offered company. But one shouldn’t get the newest jacket or be chauffeured to every other activity or be able to choose what kind of food to eat each day just because we pity you. This is where I

think we need to do a lot of work. How can you respect what they've been through and yet dare to make demands? (Group interview with HVB staff 111026 page 21)

According to Stina, it is important not to be too nice when handling unaccompanied children, feel sorry for or pity them, or start working with them for all the wrong reasons. In Stina's quote, it is furthermore accentuated as important to respond to the demands made by unaccompanied minors by making counter claims and/or requirements. In order to deal with unaccompanied children and youngsters a firm and steady hand is needed. In above narrative the act of being nice is reinterpreted as the practice of daring "to make demands" and mark explicit limits instead of feeling compassion and pity. This framing also corresponds to the classical image of the (Dionysian) youngsters as an ambivalent subject in need of supervision and guidance (Cf. Jenks 1996).

ERIK: For me, these guys then, who have received this free pass (*fribiljett*) to paradise, Sweden. So for me it's like you try to guide and assist them to ensure they understand this study thing and that they should behave respectfully (*sköta sig*) and try to make a good future for themselves, not to take the fast track because that one usually doesn't lead anywhere good, like you get indulged in crime and so on.

(Group interview with HVB staff 110615 page 21)

Erik paints a similar picture of what he frames as unaccompanied boys in need of guidance and re-direction in order for them to understand the importance of education, and that they "should behave respectfully and try to make a good future for themselves" (as opposed to choosing the "fast track" associated with criminal behavior, which "doesn't lead anywhere good"). Erik's narrative draws on the same line of reasoning that was articulated by Elisabeth and Stina, while highlighting the importance of accentuating consistent boundaries and limits for unaccompanied children in order for them to navigate in the Swedish society in the "appropriate" or "respectable" manner (Cf. Erik's quote). According to Stina, pitying them does not help unaccompanied minors, nor does allowing kids to get what they want in every situation. The quid pro quo accountability should instead be underscored when handling unaccompanied minors, as children and youngsters are themselves expected to contribute and concurrently also feel gratitude for what they receive in return. In the HVB facility, unaccompanied children and youngsters are expected, for instance, to participate in joint activities, to follow the house rules, get out of bed in time, attend school (see section 8.1.2.2 of this Chapter), yet also not take too much conflict with staff.

At the same time, unaccompanied minors are also framed as demanding too much (according to Elisabeth unaccompanied youngsters have falsely been led to believe that they can get housing, etc.) or the wrong things, hence justifying restrictive measures in return.

LOTTA: Now, I haven't had such old foster children before, but I can feel that there is a lot of "I want to have" (with them). For example, now that she has lost a cell phone, I feel that I won't go and buy one. I might think of buying a cheaper one. "Should I go and buy one of those cheap ones for you?" "No, I don't want a cheap (one), I'll buy an expensive, just like the one I had before". Instead of being happy (for what she gets)...

ANNA: I think the Swedish foster children get a lot less than our immigrants.

(Group interview with foster parents 110615 page: 16)

In the foster home the quid pro quo thinking is apparent in how foster parents narrate a practice of replacing lost gadgets with second hand items (if at all) in order for the children to learn to economize their own money in a sensible manner and take "better care" of their belongings. Such articulations correspond to what Watters (2007, 2012) and Fassin (2005) conceptualize as moral-economy reasoning, where legitimate receivers of contributions are separated from the illegitimates. This also reflects governing where the legitimate needs are separated from the illegitimate needs. In the quote above from Anna and Lotta this understanding is accentuated in how the two foster parents compare what they describe as demanding "immigrants" ("it was a lot of wanting, wanting") with "Swedish foster children". In the quote from Elisabeth in the beginning of Chapter 8, section 8.2, she compared what she framed as the requirements made by the unaccompanied minors with those made by Swedish youngsters, leading her to inform the unaccompanied children that they could not expect to be treated better than the Swedish-born and jump the queue in any ways.

The importance of teaching unaccompanied minors to economize the scarce resources given to them and be gracious in return is accentuated in many of the interviews (Cf. Erik's talk of "boys having gotten the free ticket to paradise" and how Lotta indicates that her foster daughter "should feel happy" when she offered to replace a missing mobile phone with a cheaper one). In line with the idea of contributing in order to be refunded, unaccompanied children and youngsters are expected to take the initiative to learn Swedish, adapt to Swedish norms and work hard in order to be integrated in Swedish society. Unaccompanied minors are furthermore supposed to learn how to be independent and self-catering, with an emphasis on, for example,

learning how to plan and structure their everyday lives, keep track of time, work hard and be orderly, and clean.

When the need for supervision and control are highlighted unaccompanied children and youngsters are framed as demanding boundary testers and put to the fore as manipulative and in need of guidance. The dialogue between teachers, foster parents, custodians or HVB staff with unaccompanied minors mirrors that of the authoritarian parent versus an unruly child. Within this problematization adults and children and youngsters are constructed as opposites. Adults become the rational, sensible subjects that must control, monitor and discipline youngsters because they must learn to value the virtues of punctuality, feelings of duty, assess the importance of hard work and of maintaining a good character, and so forth in return, otherwise unaccompanied minors risk becoming indolent and lazy and hence a possible burden on society.

The challenges or difficulties that teachers, social workers, HVB staff, and foster parents talk about are often created externally (by a precarious asylum system or the unaccompanied minors themselves because of their perceived lack of schooling or social knowledge) and difficult to anticipate in advance (working with uncertainty), thus constituting a threat to the stability and routines of everyday life. Control, in this problematization, can consequently only be achieved by adults marking clear and consistent boundaries amid unaccompanied minors.

7.2.2 Care and support

For the different articulations and conceptualizations of unaccompanied minors legitimizing enhanced control and supervision, another claim for action was also emphasized in the reception of unaccompanied children and youngsters.

MARIA: But then let's imagine that if it was you or I who had to send our children to another country or who had died, I wouldn't like it. If I had an 18-year-old child who was completely alone and abandoned ... I wouldn't like the social service to sit and treat it like it was fully grown. Do we see our own 18 year olds as fully competent? We don't see our 18 year olds in Sweden today as fully adults. Well, we do when it comes to unaccompanied refugee children, then they are fully adults and will have to get by and they've had less adult support than others, they have been traumatized ... Really, it isn't logical. Logic says that these (children) after all, are still young people in need of support.

(Single interview with upper secondary school curator 120328 page 22)

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HELENA: Actually, one could imagine that one should take a greater responsibility for them. One could turn it all around and say that (since they) don't have a network that can support them with second-hand furniture or someone who can shoot in a few hundred crowns when it's one's birthday and who doesn't get anything from anyone.

(Group interview with social workers in rural municipality 111012 page 27)

According to Maria (a upper secondary school curator) and Helena (a social worker), there is a tendency to construct unaccompanied minors differently from Swedish-born youngsters. For Maria she connects to the understanding put forth by Bengt in section 7.2.2 by framing unaccompanied minors as a case of any other child. She also takes this comparison further when pointing to the different possibilities or structural conditions unaccompanied children are given amidst Swedish-born youngsters. In Maria's construction unaccompanied minors are in a susceptible position, as they are expected to manage everything by themselves ("will have to get by") when turning 18.

In Maria's construction maturation is inherently conveyed as a gradual process from a stage of dependency to more or less independency, where young adults might be in need of prolonged support even after turning 18. Unaccompanied minors are concurrently problematized as subjects in need of extra adult back-up, having had less parental support than other youngsters, yet also suffering traumatic ordeals.⁸⁷

Maria frames unaccompanied minors as any other children, but there are also structural and psychological factors operating that put them in a vulnerable position, therefore constructing them as "young people in need of support". Chapter 5 presents similar narrations, as official re-articulations could debate the 18 years of age limit as the clear-cut division between children and adults by introducing the concept of the "vulnerable young adult" in need of prolonged care and support in Swedish and Norwegian policy.

The claims made by Maria are also similar to the Norwegian media narratives of missing unaccompanied minors constructed as cases of so-called "missing children" (i.e. a case of any other child), as it is the similarities between children that are emphasized in order to accuse the system of prejudice and structural racism with regard to unaccompanied minors (Cf. Chapter 4.1.1). According to the social worker Helena, Swedish society should consequently take specific action to counter the disadvantages of not having a

⁸⁷ Research on re-placed children and unaccompanied minors points to the importance of having obtained a social network of close and lasting relationships with adults (like other children under the supervision of the social services, Cf. Oppedal, Seglem and Jensen 2009; Højer and Sjöblom 2011) in order to manage a transition to adult and independent life (Brendler 2004; Gunnarsson 2008; Wallin och Ahlström 2005; Watters 2008; Nilsson 2010; Hessele 2009; Rosenberg et al. 2012; Wimelius et al. 2012).

social network or supportive family members. Quite Contrary to the understanding of unaccompanied minors as demanding, unaccompanied children and youngsters are instead the framing of them as legitimate targets of compensation and prolonged support in order to overcome their inferior positioning (Cf. the discussion concerning new measures in Chapter 8, section 8.1.3).

Central to the conceptualizations emphasized by Maria and Helena is a construction of unaccompanied minors similar to the (Apollonian) child as vulnerable and in need of parental care and nurturing in order to be safe (Cf. Jenks 1996; Meyer 2007).

LEIF: Sometimes the HVB facility has been specialized in some ways ... on something else first and then they mix up the children who are asylum seekers together with children who have had difficult situations. And then there will be a lot of focus on that one should take care of oneself and that they should follow specific rules and such things. These children with asylum problems (sic.) they may of course easily react with anger when confronted with a memory ... You then need to understand that that is a very natural reaction to what one has been through. The need to take things easy, not get punished or consequence pedagogics or something like that, because that's not what this is about.

(Single interview a psychologist 120201 page 9)

PER: And one shouldn't forget that these children often have quite a lot with them in their luggage, and maybe this then has caused that when they sleep they (are haunted by bad) dreams and so on, and back flash (sic.) about things they've been through and they need some extra security then. In most (HVB facilities) that I know of there are corridor-like environments with separate bedrooms for everyone. The staff sleep, maybe with their door a little bit open to hear what's going on ... In those cases where the kids suffer a little from nightmares and so on they might want some security, and they might have nowhere to turn. Like in a family home where you go into mom and dad's room to sleep in their arms for a while to get comfort. It doesn't exist in those places. And all the kids could really need that.

(Interview with custodian 111205 page 3f)

In Leif (a psychologist) and Per's (a custodian) quotes, the vulnerability of unaccompanied minors risks being amplified by the milieu of HVB facilities. For Leif the HVB facility is an institution that caters to children with behavior problems and not "asylum problems". The institution is emphasized as a setting opposing family life by offering the unaccompanied minor a "corridor-like environment" and insufficient parental support during the night. As unaccompanied minors cannot be comforted in their parents' arms, society should compensate them by ensuring their safety and security in a child-friendly setting. In Leif and Per's understandings, the specific situa-

tional factors — living in an asylum process and an institution — and unaccompanied minors’ enhanced risk of developing psychological distress are interconnected.

7.3 Concluding remarks

In Chapter 7, I analyze how officials and support staff narrate what they frame as the appropriate actions with regard to unaccompanied minors. Some of these strategies dwell on different techniques in order to compensate for the perceived shortcomings of these children (or their families) with regard to inherent ideas of ethnic belonging or gender, to counter the unaccompanied minors’ lack of previous education or proper knowledge, or the need to adopt new and enhanced measures to provide what is highlighted as a novel and specific group of youngsters and children. The construction of unaccompanied minors as different children or a specific group of youngsters often legitimizes specific measures. When constructed as “different”, there is also a tendency to stress the importance of, what I in the theoretical part of this thesis underscore as, more controlling and disciplining measures, but also different strategies to compensate their constructed “otherness”. The practices stressed as important in order to construct an improved reception system and to cater to unaccompanied minors does then sometimes underline enhanced control and supervision. When articulated as demanding and ambivalent subjects, officials and support staff frame their task as teaching unaccompanied minors to realistically look at their prospects, work hard, become respectable, and display gratitude in return for what is given to them. Officials and support staff tend to frame unaccompanied children and youngsters’ desires or aspirations as unrealistic or even irrelevant. This points to how needs as such are being contextually constructed between officials, support staff and unaccompanied minors, but that their different positions give officials and support staff (positioned as adults, professionals, Swedish, middle-class) a clear interpretative privilege amid the children and youngsters (positioned as children, migrant, black).

As a counterclaim some officials and support staff stress the importance of problematizing unaccompanied minors as normal children in a vulnerable position. Consequently, they underline what is then accentuated as the need for prolonged care and supportive measures, thus highlighting the similarities between children and youngsters regardless of origin. According to this problematization it is the aspects of unaccompanied minors’ specific positioning that render them safety and comfort amid other (Swedish-born) children:

being a child or youngster separated from parents and claiming asylum on their own that should be emphasized and counteracted.

8

How to pass as a respectable refugee

The previous analytical chapters highlight how unaccompanied minors are singled out as an undecided subject — sometimes as a vulnerable child in need of care and protection, and at other times as a possible strategic migrant opposing different kinds of threats to the asylum system. In Chapter 8, I look at how a group of 10 youngsters categorized as unaccompanied minors talk about this ambivalent category. I demonstrate how they sometimes come to draw on framings and problematizations similar to those emphasized in official and media narrations, whereas at other times they re-conceptualize or re-articulate the content of what being an unaccompanied child/youngster might imply. Central to this analysis is how they position themselves with regard to these constructions when they talk about their own experiences.

The 10 youngsters interviewed were all in their late teens or older, and between 15 and 21 years of age. The conversations dwell on how the youngsters experienced coming to Sweden in the first place, how they talked about their life prior to their arrival in Sweden, and how they talked about getting by in the here and now: their everyday life, important people in their lives, what they did during their free time and school or work hours, and their hopes and dreams for the future.

In the following Chapter I analyze some of the themes that surfaced during the interviews, beginning with how the youngsters narrated their journey or flight to Sweden and how they positioned themselves in these stories. Furthermore, I examine how they often made sense of the category of “Sweden” or “Swedishness” with reference to corresponding and opposing ideas of the homeland (or country of origin or “home”). Lastly, I demonstrate how the youngsters, when they re-position themselves as respectable subjects, sometimes draw on the ambivalent constructions accentuated in official and or media problematizations.

8.1 Why I am here — narrating a legitimate presence

Although the majority of children and youngsters labeled “unaccompanied minors” and/or “refugee children”⁸⁸ originate from some of the world’s most conflict-ridden areas and experienced similar contextual factors such as war, civil unrest and poverty (see Ayotte 2000; Eide 2005; Eide and Broch 2010; Watters 2008; Stretmo and Melander 2013), what is theoreticized as uniting the shared flight experiences is often the heterogeneity of their stories (Eide et al. 2012; Backlund et al. 2012; Stretmo and Melander 2013). Previous research on young migrants have tried to answer the question of why children migrate (Ayotte 2000; O’Connell Davidson and Farrow 2007; Kohli 2006; Kohli 2007). However, when it comes to what they say is the triggering cause that made them flee, how involved they were in making that decision, the duration of the escape, and the experiences they retell of the flight ordeal, it is the variation and richness of their experiences that appear to unite them (Eide 2005). The focus on children’s conditions prior to their flight, and their flight is also part of the production or homogenization of refugees that Malikki (1995) discusses. When migration is considered an anomaly, understanding why someone migrates is important. The interest in children’s conditions prior to their arrival in a new country is also part of a knowledge production where these specific conditions — the flight and the separation from loved ones — are highlighted as the worst trauma to unaccompanied children and youngsters (Eastmond and Ascher 2011).

Variation, heterogeneity and difference were also to some extent the case when the 10 youngsters interviewed in this study talked about their experiences, but the narratives also shared some interesting commonalities. Central to this analysis has not been to analyze precipitating causes of the 10 youngsters’ migrations, but rather how they talked about their flight and arrival to Sweden and positioned themselves within their stories.

8.1.1 Victim yet survivor

One of the interviewed youngsters, Dalal, gave a rather dramatic and detailed story of her flight. Her journey to Sweden was a specific situation in which a sense of order but also of time and space was collapsing. The flight

⁸⁸ By framing the concepts of unaccompanied minors or refugee children within quotation marks, my intention is not to question the legitimacy of subjects labeled as belonging to either category or the categories themselves, but to mark some distance to them as specific analytical categories or fields open to analysis.

was presented as a tale of disorientation and confusion, and contained a vivid narrative of a young girl forced to conquer harsh elements and face terrible ordeals.

DALAL: One must (get across the border). I was forced to and then ... it was almost three months I stayed in Turkey because there was no boat that could take you to Greece. But finally we were able to come to Greece. It was a small boat and we were 18 (in) it and it was very dangerous and it took five hours. ... The one who got the boat he stayed in Turkey. He told us that (the crossing) would only take half an hour and that you should arrive in Greece in the half hour, but it did not, it took five hours because we had no petrol, it ran out ... (Because of the) bad situation in Afghanistan, I could not make it there. So I wanted to live, I wanted to study, to have a bright future and so on ... but you cannot ... get such a good future in Afghanistan. There is no situation like that (so) that you can live there, then I was forced to come here. And I had problems with my stepmother too, with her children as well, and then I had to come here.

(Afghan girl 120307 page 9)

In the extract Dalal highlights certain details while others are ruled out. For instance, specific weight is put on retelling the five hours spent on a small vessel illegally trespassing Greek waters, whereas the three months in Turkey awaiting this dramatic journey by boat is almost cut out of the story. She shifts between “I” and more generalized formulations (“I was forced” versus “you have to”) in order to distinguish between those incidences that have a specific personal impact versus those situations and contextual features that she constructs as of a more global and objective character.

Dalal narrate the cause of her flight as three-fold: 1) partly due to what Dalal articulates as her own inner drive to find a future and prosper somewhere else; 2) partly owing to what she constructs as general or overall contextual features of Afghanistan (associated to nobody having future prospects or the generalized marginalized position of being a young woman (“but you cannot ... get such a good future in Afghanistan”); and 3) partly due to conflicting family relations. Dalal effectively weaves together more personal claims of hardship with what appears as generalized (applicable to all young women/people) difficulties in an intolerable context (“There is no situation like that (so) that you can live there”). What is brought forward is the understanding of having found herself in a situation where no other options but to escape are available.

Positioning oneself as the survivor but also a victim of harsh circumstances and/or a horrible flight is a narrative that is apparent in some of the stories given by the interviewed youngsters. Unaccompanied minors as the

victims of harsh circumstances were also articulated in Norwegian and Swedish media and policy narratives, and evident in stories provided by officials and support staff, which I demonstrate through Chapters 4 to 7. Whereas the Norwegian and Swedish official and public constructions tend to position the unaccompanied minor within a dichotomy of either passive child victims (deserved) or active (possible adult) strategic migrants (undeserved), some of the caregivers spoke of unaccompanied minors wherein both their agency and vulnerability is highlighted: “the survivor” against tough odds (Chapter 6, section 6.1.2).

Central to Dalal’s narration is also the sense that the flight was an unavoidable fate, something she found herself forced to take on. In similar flight narratives the youngsters narrates the flight as imposed on them rather independent of whether or not the youngsters position themselves as active or passive or both with regard to making that final decision to flee. In Dalal’s case she found herself forced to cross borders and leave Afghanistan because of the unbearable conditions there. Yet, she also stresses her own inner drive to leave the country of origin: “So I wanted to live, I wanted to study”, and hence also underlining her independence.

8.1.1.1 Finding sanctuary

In accordance with the flight narrative and the victim and survivor storyline, some of the youngsters spoke of their first impressions of arriving in Sweden as the end of a long, tough and unpredictable journey. In these stories “Sweden” symbolically plays the role of a place of refuge.

MALIK: Then we just came into Sweden, to (Malmö) Central Station. I fell asleep on the bench. Instantly, I couldn’t do anything. I didn’t even call someone ... I just fell asleep. I felt a little bit safe here and that now it’s all over as well, so I slept on the bench. I just really would love the police to come and take me there ... I don’t have to be so afraid, but during (the flight) I was terrified you could say. I felt terrible, I felt really terrible.

(Iraqi boy, 120105 page 3)

Malik, for example, narrates his arrival in Sweden as finally getting to a safe place. In the extract entering Sweden comes with a sense of relief (“I felt a little bit safe here”) compared to the sense of drama and terror he felt during his flight (“I was terrified you could say”). When Malik talk, Sweden (in the image of Malmö’s Central Station) becomes synonymous with an open and welcoming door into safety, a place where he fell asleep on one of the railway station’s benches because of total exhaustion and relief (“it’s all

over”). His fatigue is nearly forced on him (“I couldn’t do anything”) and therefore not a sign of either weakness or lack of judgement. In Malik’s story, his arrival in Sweden is constructed as finally having reached the safe end to his ordeal. His tale is that of great contrasts: the divergence between feeling terribly scared (“I felt really terrible”) and frightened during his flight, and that of finding a sanctuary at Central Station (“I don’t have to be so afraid”).

When Eide studied (2000, 2012) migrant children’s flight narratives, he found that they could be divided in three main categories: reluctant, voluntary and chaotic narrations. These three narrations dealt with how involved and prepared children or youngsters felt in making the final decision to flee but also how dramatic this experience had been for them. In relation to Dalal’s quote it is interesting to see how she constructs her flight as both something that was forced on her yet something she intended to do. Evident in Dalal and Malik’s constructions is also that of the flight situation as partly dramatic and chaotic, and shifting between Dalal’s reluctance (being forced) and activeness (voluntarily choosing to flee).

According to Eide et al. (2012), narrating and visualizing children’s migrations is practiced in research, and, as I have tried to demonstrate in Chapters 4 and 5, also in media and policy. Their migrations are also a classical theme within literature, film, and folktales and myths (Greek myth of Pirus and Helle and tale of “Hansel and Gretel” Cf. Chapter 1). Dalal and Malik’s narrations, for example, share some structural and genre typical resemblances with such classical tales. (Any similarities between flight narratives and folktales have to do with form and composition and not the content of the stories. To make such resemblances is not to say that flight narratives are made up tales but rather to point to how they bear some of the genre typical outlooks of folktales).

Both Dalal and Malik’s quotes tell dramatic yet also ambiguous stories of good-hearted youngsters striving to survive hardship and tough ordeals in order to fulfil their dreams, and maybe even to be reunited with their loved ones and find a safe haven somewhere else. In Malik’s narrative above, entering Sweden is the happy ending to a terrible journey. Sweden as a place of refuge is accentuated, but correspondingly he presents himself as the active hero who eventually finds himself in a safe position. Malik, just like Dalal in the previous story, could be the victim of cruel fate, but also a survivor who manages to reach their final and safe destination.

Positioning oneself as victim yet survivor is also a narration that goes hand-in-hand with the overall storyline that could be said to be expected from a subject applying for asylum as an unaccompanied minor in a receiving

country (see e.g., Watters 2012; Eide et al. 2012; Wikström and Wettergren 2013). Connected to Malik's (1995) understanding of the construction of the refugee as a specific subject of knowledge, Kohli (2006) states that presenting an accurate narrative, in other words in line with the tacit and explicit assumptions of what being a legitimate unaccompanied minor might apply, is the key to acceptance as an unaccompanied minor. In this regard being a legitimate implies some sort of vulnerability either due to being a vulnerable child or harsh circumstances, as were articulated in Swedish and Norwegian public and official problematizations in Chapters 4 and 5. Wettergren and Wickström (2013) demonstrate how such tacit assumptions work in the case of how the Swedish Migration Board grants Somali asylum seekers the status of subsidiary protection or not. Nevertheless, the Swedish framing of Somalia as a war-torn country results in many Somalis being granted a permanent stay in Sweden, the stories given by individual asylum seekers (how they talk about their experiences) are still considered important in order for the Board to establish the credibility of the asylum seeker. Eide (2005) furthermore demonstrates that the group of Hungarian youngsters that arrived in Norway during the 1950s framed their stories as tales of "freedom fighters" originating from a suppressive regime in a similar way. This self-presentation was in line with Norwegian expectations and confirmed Norway's status (self-image) as a democratic and open country. Dalal and Malik's stories of the country of origin or the flight are constructed as a context and/or space as a binary opposition to Sweden. For Dalal Afghanistan is narrated as a suppressive regime and cruel place of no hope, while Sweden (in Malik and Dalal's constructions) is symbolically put to the fore as a place of safety, kindness, hope, and prosperity.

8.1.2 "Telling without talking"

Another similar way of presenting oneself with regard to a flight narrative (and what were the most common amongst the 10 youngsters interviewed) was to, for example, state as the Afghan boy Alim did that; "the flight was so horrible that I wish not to talk about it" (Afghan boy 120118 page 2), which became a specific way to position oneself vis-à-vis questions concerning the flight and past experiences.

TAABISH / TRANSLATOR: And then when (Taabish, his mother and siblings, other irregular migrants and smugglers) were to cross the border between Iran and Turkey. Taabish crossed the border, but not in the car with the five people that his mother and siblings were sitting in. (The border police) found that they were illegal and they deported them, sent

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(mother and siblings) back to Iran. He continued on that road, but the mom and siblings returned to Iran and the mum gets sick and the children get sick, too, and they cannot continue on their journey. ... It's just him arriving all alone in Turkey. ...

CHARLOTTE: Okay so you had to go there all by yourself?

TAABISH: Hmmm.

TRANSLATOR: And now he has arrived to Turkey, and then from Turkey and onwards there's a lot of stuff that happens and this maybe he doesn't want to talk about.

(Interview with Afghan boy 111128 page 2)

In Taabish's quote, mediated through his translator, he gives a rather thorough report of the incidences that led to his separation from his mother and siblings. In the extract Taabish highlights this part of his journey in the present tense while effectively silencing the part of the flight narrative that deals with his arrival in Turkey and beyond. Indicating "a lot of stuff that happens and this maybe he doesn't want to talk about" also sheds light on this part of his story. This is a kind of "talking without telling" that effectively accentuates the possible drama or trauma associated with Taabish's visit to Turkey. Without going into further detail we are invited to speculatively fill in the blanks.

Framing the flight or part of it as incidences so traumatic that you do not want to talk about them is also an effective way of silencing further investigation or scrutiny into the past. According to Kohli (2006, 2007) and Eide (2000), incomplete storytelling could also be seen as examples of unaccompanied children and youngsters giving "thin descriptions" of their prior lives. Providing these types of descriptions is a wise strategy not to reveal too much information in a situation where you do not know who you are talking to, you are met with suspicion, or when you do not want to go into detail about incidences that could cause you (and potentially even the interviewer) to feel bad or uncomfortable (see e.g., Malmsten 2012 for similar lines of argumentation).

With regard to the 10 youngsters interviewed, carving out some of the drama of the flight, effectively silencing other aspects or telling without talking (saying that your ordeal has been so dramatic that you intend not to talk about it) could also be understood as a specific way of presenting oneself as a respectable refugee minor. Either the young person presents their ordeal in detail (or leaves the listener/reader to fill in the blanks) or they underline that they have witnessed and survived tough circumstances and that they hence have come to Sweden because of that reason. In Chapters 4 and 5, I highlight how unaccompanied minors were often officially constructed as subjects claiming asylum for "many different reasons", a statement that could also

indicate that some of these reasons (i.e., being real victims) were more legitimate or deserved than others (i.e., being strategic or economic migrants). Telling without talking is one amongst many specific strategies that is respectable with regard to a climate of possible mistrust.

The telling without talking narrative can consequently be analyzed as playing an important part in legitimizing the silent or implicit (and often even explicit) question of “Why have you come here?”, which the youngsters might have been confronted with or somehow feel themselves expected to answer. The stories provided by Dalal, Malik, Alim, and Taabish, for instance, could be examined as ways of positioning themselves to such a question. Their legitimacy “here” is linked to the severity of their experiences “there” — being “real” victims or not — in order to pass as a “respectable refugee minor” in Sweden. In Chapters 4 and 5, I analyze how official articulations of unaccompanied minors problematize them as either vulnerable victims or possible strategic migrants posing a threat to the asylum system (Cf. Stretmo 2010). How they narrated their ordeals could be understood with regard to these problematizations. By stressing that their ordeal has been a tough one the legality of their presence here is underlined. Thus, they are also presenting stories expected of them.

8.1.3 Passing as a cool kid

Two of the interviewed youngsters, Taban and Nadif, seem to resist positioning themselves as victims of harsh circumstances and didn’t “tell without talking” (at least not in the “my ordeal was so tough that I do not want to talk about it” kind of way) when they spoke of their flight experiences.

NADIF: It was different (for different) people. Some come by boat, not to Sweden but Italy, some will (travel by) car or ... we came directly (by) plane to Sweden.

TABAN: First, from (inaudible) to Addis Ababa and then from Addis Ababa to Stockholm. We arrived by airplane. ...

NADIF: Well (concerning) unaccompanied refugees there are many who arrive (by) boat and (who have had a) pretty rough ordeal ... (I) was lucky. It depends on whether you have the energy, (if) you (get) a little help or a little money, your (journey) might be better than for others.

(Two Somali boys 111118 page 5)

Nadif and Taban’s dialogue extract can be read as another way of presenting a flight narrative. On the contrary to Dalal, Malik, Alim, and Taabish’s, and some of the other interviewed youngsters, these two retold their ordeal

by exhibiting a brief and general view on *from* and to *where* and *with what means* (of transportation) that Somali or other refugees in general try to make their way to Sweden. Compared to for instance Dalal, Alim or Taabish's stories there seems to be something occasional ("it was different (for different) people"), undramatic ("we came directly (by) plane"), and straightforward in the way they talk about their flights. When Nadif and Taban retell a seemingly uncomplicated narrative of taking a plane from Addis Ababa directly to Stockholm, no light is shed on their emotional state of mind. How they somehow made their way from Somalia into neighboring Ethiopia is totally carved out of the story. While effectively silencing possible drama or feelings of turmoil that Nadif and Taban's flight may have caused and presenting rather thin descriptions, their experiences could also be read as a means of positioning themselves as cool kids, both with regard to each other and the interviewer but also to the victim of harsh fate narratives highlighted in some of the other youngsters' stories.

According to Nadif, many unaccompanied minors experience terrible ordeals enroute to Europe, but depending on whether or not "you" (he distances himself from his story by using a generalized term) have had some resources (economical means or contacts who can offer some help) the journey ahead might be "better than for others". Nadif positions himself as someone who luckily enough has had those extra resources and his own energy to rely on ("I was lucky"). Nadif hence distinguishes his specific situation from that of many other less fortunate refugees or unaccompanied minors.

Further analysis of the dialogue above could be done on how Nadif and Taban position themselves as cool kids. According to Burcar (2005), who has conducted a study on how a group of young men talks about their experiences of having been victims of crime, there are traditional masculine logos in the "right" or "wrong" play of emotions or way of retelling these experiences. When men become victims of crime they are expected to seek vengeance but also not to talk about or display emotions or affections (Ibid: 111). The respectable masculinity displayed in the young men's talk is hence associated to being tough, biting the bullet or simply taking it (i.e., being victimized) like a man). According to this stance a man as such is expected to prove his strength by being able to handle more severe distress than a woman, for instance. (On the contrary the idea "taking it like a woman" could be associated to being a sissy or cowardice.) Concurrently, "taking it like a man" could be implied as being street smart, that is to keep your cool in a time of crisis. When Nadif points out above that whether or not "your" (generalization) ordeal as a refugee will be tough or not depends on "whether you have the energy", he passively (and implicitly) also positions himself as someone who

has handled it right by displaying the proper and respectable level of (masculine) toughness.

The construct of being street smart was also part of a construction given by officials and support staff with regard to unaccompanied minors who were highlighted as positive exceptions. This was, for example, expressed in the dialogue between the teachers Louisa and Emma when they talked about Afghan boys who were constructed as having succeeded against all odds (Cf. Chapter 6, section 6.1.2). This also constitutes an opposing image to the official one where agency often appears associated to strategic migration. However, when the caregivers talked about absconders, or unaccompanied minors framed as choosing to go underground in order to avoid deportation from Sweden, they also drew on the official and media understanding of unaccompanied minors as problematic, as agency was constructed as the ability to supply for oneself. (This view was expressed in the quote from the home for care and housing (HVB) staff member Stina in Chapter 6, section 6.2.1). Supplying for oneself can be analyzed as parallel to being street smart, which could be constructed as either a being positive exception or a problematic kid.

TABAN: If there wasn't war in Somalia we've had stayed there, we would never have come here.

(Two Somali boys 111118 page 39)

Though Taban and Nadif could be analyzed as resisting being positioned as victims of harsh fates, further in the interview Taban highlights how both of them would “never have come here” in the first place if it were not for the fact that they were forced to escape because of the “war in Somalia”. Neither Taban nor Nadif discuss much of their everyday life in Somalia, instead they highlight how the general situation (war) made life there unsustainable for them.

In order to legitimize their presence in Sweden or to pass as respectable unaccompanied minors, the youngsters stress, in one way or another, how they would not have come to Sweden if the situation back home had been different. In order to legitimize their position as unaccompanied minors in Sweden, they are expected to either retell stories of traumatic experiences or, like in the case of Nadif and Taban, refer to a situation in their homeland that made life unbearable for them (or both like in Dalal's story).

When telling their stories the youngsters relate their narratives to more common understandings of what being an unaccompanied minor entail (being exposed, passiveness, vulnerability, etc.) and what it then takes to be

categorized as one. However, to some extent, they might also object or distance themselves from some of the qualities (possible victimization) associated with being an unaccompanied minor.

8.2 Tales of contrasting worlds

Another common theme in the interviews was how the youngsters spoke of their first arrival in Sweden. Malik's narrative on finding sanctuary offers a glimpse into such a storyline and one where Sweden is put to the fore as a peaceful safe haven. It is interesting how all 10 interviewees similarly frame Sweden and/or Swedishness as a specific space, and how they eventually position themselves and their ordeal according to this understanding.

8.2.1 Positioning oneself as the newcomer

Some of the interviewees retell their first arrival in Sweden as a story of initial bewilderment and contrasting worlds. For them Sweden is the backdrop to newcomer narratives and finding oneself confronted with the associated obstacles and hardships.

ADIB: To suddenly arrive in a new country, to live all by yourself ... I had never before been apart from my family. The first day was tough. I had gotten a room all by myself. After a month I started school and things got better. I felt very lonely, but when I started school I met two boys that I made friends with.

(Interview with Afghan boy 111114 page 4)

According to Adib, his first time in Sweden was associated with a state of isolation and loneliness, describing his experience by saying, "To suddenly arrive in a new country, to live all by yourself". Adib's passive language frames the ordeal as something general or common to all people in his position. Through this tone he also distances himself from his own narrative (see e.g., O'Connor, 2000: 77). He then highlights the state of loneliness he felt by shifting to "I" and revealing how strange it seemed to him to be in a bedroom alone, as he had never been separated from his family. In his narration the feeling of loneliness seems emphasized by the fact that he was also expected to sleep alone.

Being the newcomer clearly connects to a sense of bewilderment and loneliness, which is hard to narrate. Adib pauses rather than elaborates on what coming to a new country implies. Instead of detailing his first day im-

pressions (“The first day was tough”, a passive and objective generalization), he elegantly switches focus to the instance one month later when he was allowed to start school. School becomes a place where Adib could meet friends and make time pass, and is constructed in opposition to being in a new country or in the HVB facility he was initially in. For Adib “school” is an important social meeting point (compare Adib’s construction with Andersson et al. 2010; de Wal Pastoor 2012 and how school is brought forward both as an important place to learn but also a place to reside socially for unaccompanied or refugee children). By shifting focus and tempus Adib lets us in on some of his initial loneliness without unfolding this experience in detail. Instead of feeling sorry for himself, we are to understand that Adib is better off *now* (after he started school and made friends), than he was *then*. His short narrative is that of someone who has succeeded rather than someone we should pity (“when I started school I met two boys that I made friends with”).

ALIM: Yes, I knew nothing. Everything was strange: people and clothes and everything. As I said there are big differences between Afghanistan and Sweden, everything. About people and (...) city (...) and everything really (...) everything is different (...) and it’s no good. And football ... it was my first session, like ever, and (my first meeting) with the (municipality’s) football team.

CHARLOTTE: You hadn’t played football in Afghanistan?

ALIM: Never, never. (Laughs) Really it was my first session and I met the new coach and the other kids in the team. “My name is Alim and I am a new kid ..., and I’m here to start training.” It was a training match. And do you know, I couldn’t even kick the ball, just kick the ball, I couldn’t. Really, the other guys they made a lot of jokes or they laughed at me a lot.

(Afghan boy, 120118, page 4)

When articulating how strange things had appeared to Alim when he first arrived in Sweden, he points out how weird and bewildering everything had felt (the sense of bewilderment is reinforced by how “everything” is repeated five times and the use of passive phrasing, “Everything was strange”). According to Alim’s extract he was astonished and confused by what he emphasizes as the rather gigantic disparities between his life in Afghanistan (or what he had known) and life in Sweden (or what had up until then been rather unknown to him, “I knew nothing”). In the narrative being new to a context puts the subject in a disadvantaged and rather risky position. In order to concretize and give an example of his confusion Alim discloses a specific instance framed as a funny yet rather embarrassing story of how he became

the laughing stock of all the members of the local football team. When Alim retells this incidence he shifts focus and acts out the ordeal by presenting himself to an imaginary audience (“My name is Alim and I am a new kid”). He entrusts us with this information in a familiar tone (he even laughs at the old Alim, who unintentionally exposes his total ignorance of football). By laughing he also distances himself from any possible feelings of pity that we might feel. (The storyline still also holds a little ambivalence as to whether or not the other boys joke with him or laugh at his expense.)

In the interviews being a newcomer is similar to a subject lacking the proper knowledge needed in order to get things right in Swedish everyday life. In Alim’s football narrative the sport becomes the kind of know-how (or proper knowledge) a young boy could be expected to have in the Swedish context. The ability to kick the ball becomes an implicit marker of Swedish normality, a tacit knowledge one could anticipate from someone at Alim’s age and gender. He puts his initial ignorance of what constitutes Swedish masculine normality on display by not having been able to kick the ball, which is highlighted as being a clown or loser. By framing his ignorance as making a fool of himself Alim also distances himself from the “newcomer Alim” he used to be. At the same time, his extract also implicitly offers a glimpse into other more silent childhood narratives, where boys and girls, like Alim, do not necessarily have the free time, environment or the money to play football. Alim, who seemingly has adopted similar values to these Swedish childhoods, has come to view his own as deviant or maybe even experiences shameful about. Alim’s possible ambivalence about his former experiences is also interesting to analyze with regard to how children with experiences different from the European or Western contexts are emphasized as associated with childhood (i.e., working to make a living instead of playing or going to school) risks being “othered” and positioned as subjects outside of childhood (Cf. Jenks 1996; Engebriksen 2002, 2012; Meyer 2007).

Alim’s narration is also interesting with regard to the constructions highlighted by officials and support staff in Chapter 6, section 6.3, where unaccompanied minors are seen as “children with shortcomings” and thus in need of specific compensations, pedagogics and social guidance in order to compensate for their perceived lack of (proper) social knowledge (Cf. Chapter 7). Alim seems to view himself and his experiences through the eyes of officials and support staff and hence constructs his own experiences as somewhat deficient or even shameful in comparison to a sense of Swedishness (Cf. Fanon 1997; Skeggs 2000).

ALIM: And I had goals ... (planned for my) future. That's just ... really important to have self-confidence So maybe just after seven months, eight to nine months, I now play in the senior team. ... Yes in such (a) short time. The other guys are still playing for the preparatory team.

(Afghan boy, 120118, page 5)

But Alim's football narrative is not all about his initial disorientation, as later in the interview he reconnects to football by highlighting how he is now playing with the senior team, whereas the other guys (those who had once laughed) were still playing with the preparatory team. By prospering or succeeding ("in just a short time"), Alim talks about himself as someone having the last laugh in this matter. His triumph is constructed as due to: "I had goals" (targeted work) and "self-confidence". Alim speaks of himself as the active and self-made hero who advances, quite similar to the survivor narrative that some caregivers highlighted in Chapter 6, section 6.1.2, when conceptualizing some unaccompanied minors as respectable exceptions from problematic categories.

Adib and Alim's constructions are also interesting to view in light of the visual articulation of unaccompanied minors in official pamphlets and reports and newspaper articles that I discuss in the introduction to Chapter 5, showing them in a suitable and child-friendly Swedish and Norwegian context, while happily playing games and smiling. To some extent Adib and Alim's success stories mirror the notion that as long as vulnerable unaccompanied children (real victims) are offered what Swedish and Norwegian children receive (a childhood, play, friends) everything will work out just fine.

Although Adib and Alim's first Swedish encounters are framed as risky, both offer a narrative of someone being better off now than before. Alim's narration furthermore becomes the tale of someone determined to succeed. This is also a theme noted in other interviews and something I look into further in this chapter. Firstly, I analyze some examples of how the youngsters talk about their initial Swedish experiences and their place of origin, and how they position themselves in this regard.

8.2.2 Here versus there

Though many of the youngsters revealed fairly little of their lives prior to their arrival in Sweden, country of origin narratives often function as a backdrop to the youngsters' comparisons of life there (before/country of origin) and life here (after/country of resettlement), or what they had experienced as challenging when they first arrived in Sweden.

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HAALA: In the beginning, it's really difficult to adapt here. Here in Sweden everything is, kind of, everybody just sits inside, like no fun. We who come from other countries, we think it is empty when you arrive. Everybody sits at home, nobody's talking, nobody's outside ... everybody just goes to bed really early.

(Girl from Somalia, 120124, page 20)

ALIM: In my Swedish family there is a lot of positive, but there is a lot of negative too. And a Swedish family has a lot of rules about one has to eat like that, sleep like that, come like that, go like that. Everything is dependent on a program. Really, I have learnt a lot, but maybe it's difficult for other guys.

(Afghan boy 120118 page 17)

When Haala and Alim talk about coming to Sweden it is about their experiences of confronting a new, different and important rule-based system. Whereas Alim's understanding refers to being re-placed in a Swedish foster family, Haala's is about her initial difficulty of navigating Swedish society or adjusting to a novel milieu by pointing out the differences between what she constructs as people similar to her ("we") originating from "other countries". Haala's "we" construction is associated with a sociable, fun and outgoing way of life, and spending time outside versus what she constructs as the Swedish way, framed as "everybody else", characterized by empty streets, people residing inside, timidity, and a habit of going to bed really early (accentuated by repeating how everybody sits inside). Haala positions herself as an outsider to this Swedishness.

According to Alim, some (unaccompanied? migrant?) guys might find it hard to adjust to the rule-based Swedish system, while he positions himself as a subject having adapted ("I have learnt a lot"). As stated in the previous section, Alim seems to associate the instance of being an unaccompanied minor or migrant to a subject lacking proper Swedish social knowledge, hence having difficulties adjusting "here". Yet, he sets himself as different or an exception to this hard-to-adjust-subject by pointing out how well he has managed to adjust.

HAALA: It was good in some ways (at the HVB facility), but we who come from other countries we kind of (...) and here in Sweden there are always rules about (...) when to sleep, when to wake up, what to do during the day. And we didn't know these rules so it was really difficult for them, for us, to adapt to how it all worked. ... When we stayed (at the HVB facility) we wanted to eat halal meat, we who are Muslims do, and then they forbid us. They said, "No, you're not allowed to have halal meat". ... We aren't to buy that for you".

So we said, "If we'll buy it with our own money, then we can make halal meat?" "No you can't!" So that was really difficult. We didn't eat meat when we stayed there.

(Somali girl 120124 page 7)

According to Haala's line of reasoning it has been difficult for her to adapt to the rules in her HVB facility (being forced to go to bed early on weekdays) because of opposing outlooks or her "Somaliness" (or "migrant-ness") opposing the Swedishness. Sweden (or the HVB facility) is synonymous with a rather rigid rule system in Haala's narrative, highlighted by how the Muslim children were not allowed to eat halal meat there. By replacing the word "they" for "we", Haala generalizes her experience by making it a core part of those of all the other kids and/or girls who lived at the same facility. By doing so Haala also associate herself to this migrant and Muslim position. According to Haala, the HVB facility was "good in some ways"; however, what she frames as incomprehensible Swedish rules and rigidity (not being able to eat or purchase halal meat) ultimately collides with the youngsters staying there. In Haala's extract being forced to go bed too early is accentuated as a general example of screwed up and dull Swedishness, contrasted by the Somali and/or immigrant way of life, where staying up late, socializing and having a good time is validated. Not being able to eat halal meat becomes a specific situation wherein the consequences of adapting to the HVB facility's rules means either abandoning her Muslim identity ("we wanted to eat halal meat, we who are Muslims do") or go without meat. Rigidity is not just narrated as specific to the HVB facility but is generalized as a core part of Swedishness ("here in Sweden"), ultimately shifting responsibility from the facility specifically to Swedish culture in general. Haala's decision not to eat meat at all is possibly a way of articulating a silent resistance strategy: she does not really make a fuss yet correspondingly manages to pass and present herself as a respectable Muslim.

Haala's experience of being denied halal meat is interesting when compared to the caregivers' narratives in Chapter 7, section 7.2.1, where unaccompanied minors are said to be "demanding children" in need of supervision, discipline and guidance. Some officials and support staff will frame it as important not to let unaccompanied minors decide on what to eat in the HVB facilities, instead they should be grateful for whatever they receive. In Haala's extract being denied halal meat collided with what she sees as being a respectable Muslim, thus making her Muslim identity incommensurable to Swedishness. For her becoming Swedish corresponds to her ability to oblige to the Swedish system and not the other way around.

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TABAN: It's not the same; it doesn't look the same, it's two different countries, Somalia and Sweden.

LIVE: Tell me, what's different?

TABAN: The war, it's war in Somalia and not here.

NADIF: Cultures are different too, it's not the same.

(Group interview with two Somali boys, 111118 page 1)

Nadif and Taban underline a similar understanding of “there” versus “here” by pointing to possible cultural differences between Somalia and Sweden, but also by referring to contextual dissimilarities such as those between a war-torn country and a country not stricken by war. These differences are presented as both factual and objective (“It's not the same”) and hence not merely Taban and Nadif's opinions.

NADIF: Even if it's war there, we're not talking about Somaliland, (but) where there is war there is also school. The war isn't everyday. If there's war (it) might be tonight, but tomorrow it might get better, we can go to school. Everyone goes working and they don't care about war and that.

(Group interview with two Somali boys 111118 page 10)

When asked to talk about his life prior to his flight, Nadif gives a short account of what living in a war-torn country implies. By highlighting how life gets by in Somalia, how people go to work and children to school (even though there has been an ongoing civil war in Somalia for the last 20 years), Nadif's extract normalizes the situation in his country of origin. He frames war as an unpredictable situation (he does not really say or specify what “war” is). As such war is faceless, not continuant nor fixed but something that happens periodically in specific spaces (e.g., not in Somaliland), and something everybody somehow gets used to and tries their best to ignore (“they don't care about war”) while getting by (“where there is war there is also school”).

The life “there” versus the life “here” is understood through their dissimilarities. In Chapters 6 and 7, I analyze how officials and support staff spoke of what they constructed as the cultural dispositions of unaccompanied minors versus Swedish society and Swedishness, hence accentuating the differences between the two. In the unaccompanied minors' narratives these dissimilarities are constructed as overwhelming and rather fixed cultural differences causing possible misunderstandings or “cultural collisions” between people. These differences were also seen as examples of diverse practices. In Haala's extract it was the custom of taking an early night versus staying up

late or eating halal meat that was an important marker between the Swedish (distanced, dull, rigid) and Somali (fun, respectable, Muslim) way of life, and Haala clearly identifies with Somaliness.

In Nadif and Taban's construction the disparities between "here" and "there" are instead so taken for granted that further explanations go without saying. The contextual difference between war-torn countries versus those without war is also straightforward. Yet, when Nadif gives insights into how it is to live in such a war-stricken country he offers a fragment of an alternative story. By simultaneously stressing the similarities between Sweden and Somalia (e.g., going to school, people working), Nadif is presenting us with a more nuanced image of life in Somalia or a critique of the one-sidedness in the Swedish construction of Somalia. He also separates the presence of war from his conception of Somalia: war is something that happens in Somalia and hence not a quality of Somalia in itself. His narration resists a single and simplistic story by pointing to alternatives (Cf. Ngozi Adichie 2009). This is interesting to examine in comparison to Malik's framing of Sweden as a safe haven (section 8.1.1.1) or Dalal's view of Afghanistan as a country synonymous with repression (section 8.1.1).

8.2.3 The important language

When narrating their first-time-in-Sweden theme, the youngsters often talk about language. Not understanding Swedish and not feeling understood by others are experiences many of the interviewed youngsters said further enhanced and reinforced their initial state of bewilderment. To be unable to make oneself understood comes to equalize social isolation from other teens or the youngsters talking about initially not having dared to make contact in.⁸⁹

NAJMA: It took me about a year to learn Swedish so that I could start in the normal class and attend the normal lectures. So between 8th to 9th grades, I went into the normal classroom where I studied with the normal students. There I got my grades for school so that it could go well for me. ... You're ashamed in the beginning when you don't know the language. People are very afraid of saying the wrong thing and I was very shy, so I wanted to learn the language first and then ... just come in there (classroom) and understand the language and be like everyone else.

⁸⁹ Studies conducted on unaccompanied minors and refugee children emphasize how feelings of loneliness and/or the difficulty to make friends with other children are often highlighted when the children and youngsters talk about their experiences (Cf. De Waal Pastoor 2013; Björnberg 2010, 2013).

(Somali girl, 120112 Page 7)

When Najma talks about how she decided to develop her Swedish skills before she dared enter what she labels “the normal class and attend the normal lectures” with the “normal students”, she shifts between presenting her story a bit matter-of-factly (“It took me about a year to learn Swedish”) and “I-form” (“I got my grades for school so that could go well for me”), in a way that accentuates Najma’s own agency with regard to her school achievements. Her story is similar to Alim’s, as a narrative of success, having worked hard and methodical.

What Najma underlined as normality is associated with having Swedish language skills, and the “normal students” as peers who attend what she labels “normal class”. A possible analysis of Najma’s “normal class” could be that to some extent it equalizes a Swedish class, which consists of conceivably Swedish-born peers who have entered the school system at the age of six, later to advance according to the “expected” rate of progression, and who speak fluent Swedish. In Chapters 6 and 7, I provide examples of how teachers working with introductory students tend to “other” the introductory classes and also position these classes and their students “outside” of what were intrinsically accentuated as “the normal class” of mainly Swedish-born peers.

Thus, normality is intrinsically, in the narrations made by many officials and support staff in Chapters 6 and 7 and in Najma’s narrative, synonymous with a sense of Swedishness that Najma articulates as hard to achieve. The normal class is also inherently constructed as opposite to the introductory class that the newly arrived children and youngsters such as Najma initially have been referred. To some extent the introductory class in Najma’s extract might also be analyzed as a place where she could find shelter from the scrutinizing gaze of others (Swedish-born children) until she felt ready to attend normal lectures, but hence also a space somewhere outside of the normal class. The position of being a newcomer to the Swedish language is associated with shamefulness: “You’re ashamed in the beginning when you don’t know the language”. (Najma somewhat distances herself from her story by generalizing this experience to all kids in her situation.)

By stating that “I was very shy” Najma also legitimizes why she initially did not risk enrolling in the “normal class” before she mastered Swedish. Similarly, she constructs it as her own responsibility to dare to take that step or not. Najma frames her own school trajectory to a great extent the fruit of her own personal achievement and agency.

In Najma’s extract the notion of being “like everyone else” equalizes subjects who have achieved the desired level of Swedishness. The anomalous

position is that of subjects (e.g., newly arrived youngsters, migrants, immigrants) who do not speak fluent Swedish and hence risk being seen badly amongst their peers (i.e., making a fool out of oneself or being shamed).

Although the 10 youngsters interviewed were all fluent speakers of their own native languages (some of them were even multilingual and mastered several languages) and that most of the officials and support staff they met in Sweden did not speak their languages, they constructed their inexperience of Swedish as a personal deficiency. This mirrors the framing of the Swedish language as the norm, which is highlighted by the teachers presented in Chapter 6.

According to Najma, not having proper Swedish skills makes you different from everybody else. Unable to speak fluent Swedish is then seen as something to feel shameful about. In order to not make a fool of oneself and be accepted amongst their peers, some of the youngsters stressed that Swedish language skills are a critical knowledge. For Najma this meant withdrawing to the introductory class until she felt she understood Swedish enough.

Also evident in the youngsters' quotes is how some of them stress they are better off now than they were in the beginning, but also the accentuation of their own agency in relation to their achieved success. These constructions oppose the image of unaccompanied minors as ambivalent and erratic subjects that were sometimes emphasized by officials and support staff in Chapters 6 and 7.

8.3. Positioning oneself as a specific unaccompanied minor

The youngsters interviewed often narrate Sweden as a well-functioning country and the reception of unaccompanied minors as effective. Still, there is often ambivalence between what the youngsters sometimes construct as desiring and what they frame as respectable to ask of the reception system. In Haala's quote in the previous section, for instance, she stressed how the HVB facility she used to live in "was good in some ways" but she also gave examples of incidences that illustrated how adapting to the rules and regulations had been tough for her (and the other unaccompanied minors living there). Relative to the conceptualizations the youngsters' give of the reception system is also how they position themselves with regard to it. For example, in Haala's quote this was evident in the way she positioned herself as a Muslim immigrant and different from what she noted as Swedishness. Talking about

the reception system as such involves positioning oneself as a specific young subject in concordance to it.

8.3.1 Being grateful

Malik gave the following reply when asked to reveal some insights into how he initially felt when he was placed in a HVB facility instead of together with his uncle and extended family:

MALIK: Really when (social workers) said that then ... I thought that there would possibly be no funny business, and I thought that (if) there were anything that I didn't like, I would just run off. I just reasoned like that ... I thought that I would do as they wanted, I wouldn't break the rules, I didn't want to be a stubborn kid that says, "No, I want to stay with my uncle".

(Iraqi boy 120105 page 4)

According to Malik, he agreed to be placed at the HVB facility, as he believed that there was nothing for him to be fussy about. He speaks of himself as a cool, easy going kid who follows the decision made by the social services, similarly highlighting his own agency (by pointing out how he would have run off if the placement did not suit him). Although the matter at hand — a placement decision made by the social services officer — is rarely something a child is free to decide on their own, Malik frames the incident as somehow in concordance with his own wishes or something he does not object to.⁹⁰ Malik did not want to “break the rules” or behave like “a stubborn kid”. (Malik’s determination with regard to the matter is highlighted by his use of “I”: “(if) there were anything that I didn’t like, I would just run off”, “I would do as they wanted”). According to him opposing this decision would have been equal to “breaking the rules” or maybe even to behave like a spoiled child. He positions himself as a youngster who trustingly and obediently follows the decisions made by the social services, but he also underlines his own good judgement, instinct and capacity: being a cool kid. This way of positioning himself could also be seen as rather reminiscent of the way Nadif

⁹⁰ According to the National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) (2012, 2013a and b) the social services is obliged to take the child’s requests and needs into account with regard to any given decision. The child’s wishes as such are always to be analyzed relative to what the social services understands are in the best interest of that particular child. The best interest principle does sometimes even override what might be the child’s own requests, according to the National Board of Health and Welfare, as the social services might judge the child’s preferences as on collision course with what the social services officer considers as in that child’s best interest (Socialstyrelsen 2013b: 11).

spoke of himself in his flight narrative: a cool yet also active, street smart respectable subject.

MALIK: I came to Sweden not knowing were to end up, I didn't know there were any youth homes which many people think are like a prison. But I sit there like a silent person all the time and don't do anything stupid. And many drink, do a lot of stupid things and I don't. I feel very, very safe in that home, and I'm on time and I do exactly what they want me to. (Iraqi boy 120105 page 21)

Further in the interview Malik also assesses his own behavior more specifically admits the other youngsters staying at the particular HVB facility. Malik distances himself from the other young people (i.e., unaccompanied minors) staying there: while they ("many people" or the other kids) object to the rules in the facility and drink and behave badly (in Malik's quote their bad behavior is reinforced: "a lot of stupid things"), Malik once again highlights his own obedience toward the system or the staff: "I'm on time and I do exactly what they want". He constructs the HVB facility as a safe place, himself as the silent opposite to doing stupid things or as a respectable kid instead of one who acts out. The construction of the facility as a safe house is interesting vis-à-vis his understanding of Sweden as a safe haven (section 8.1.1.1). Malik's self-presentation can be analyzed as accentuating someone who acts respectfully and shows gratitude by being compliant and submissive. He also constructs himself as someone who did not expect too much in advance ("I didn't know there were any youth homes") and who hence feels grateful for whatever he receives. Gratefulness and contentment are some of the virtues Malik intrinsically assigns himself while distancing himself from other unaccompanied minors who, according to him, do not act equivalently. These are all behaviors that would position Malik as deserved of the support given him according to the lines of reasoning presented by the caregivers in Chapter 7, section 7.2.1 (quid pro quo, that is offering something in return, such as being grateful and compliant, were expected). Yet, Malik's narrative could also be examined as positioning himself as a kid who has learned the rules of the game, and who has then decided to play along in order to make the best of his situation. This construction mirrors Nadif's self-positioning as being a street smart kid.

When asked to give her opinion on the reception of unaccompanied minors, Najma gives the following account:

NAJMA: Honestly, I think that society has already done what that they can do without ... The problems are here anyways, because unaccompanied children arrive and society cannot

meet their requirements or their needs or even give these youngsters what they need, certainly not, it will never happen. These kids need ... something else, something that society cannot offer them. They need love, they need support, they need emotional love and everything, they really need this, but society cannot help them with that. What society can contribute, society already offers them, I think. If unaccompanied children could get their parents here and the society helps them with that, then the requirements are fulfilled, society already does what they can, kind of what society can do.

(Somali girl 120112 page 20)

Najma points to how she thinks that Swedish society is doing what she frames as its very best (“What society can contribute, society already offers”) to cater to the practical needs of unaccompanied minors. On the other hand, she understands that the children or youngsters that arrive have requests beyond those that society can provide. In Najma’s construction the category of unaccompanied minors requires additional loving and affectionate relationships. The problem in Najma’s narrative in relation to the reception of such minors is constructed as the fact that they arrive in Sweden in the first place. Swedish society is framed as doing all it should and possibly can do to take care of those unaccompanied minors that arrive. According to Najma, the children require “emotional love”, thus pointing out the difference between what are acts of professional care versus close and affectionate relationships. A possible solution to the problem of unaccompanied minors arriving in Sweden by themselves and having other needs would, according to Najma, be to support reunification with their parents in Sweden. This could solve the mismatch of unaccompanied minors needs and/or requirements and society’s machinery of different actions. Underlying her story is an understanding of Swedish society synonymous with an apparatus of well-functioning and practical arrangements, but also of professional relationships where people are interchangeable. This “society of professional relationships” could be analyzed as a binary opposition to relationships characterized by their uniqueness, closeness, intimacy, and affection, and what Najma possibly or indirectly constructs as quintessential to the relationship that can exist between family members (see e.g., Stretmo and Melander 2013 for a discussion on professional versus private relationships as a binary opposition). In Najma’s conceptualization there consist limits to the kind of support that she constructs as reasonable to ask of society or support staff involved in the reception of unaccompanied minors (“society already does what they can”). Her narration is somewhat parallel to Malik’s: there are obvious limits to what a (respectable) unaccompanied minor can expect or even ask of Swedish society, deciding to accept the limits could then be analyzed as a construction that underlines

one's own agency (the self-presentation of having decided to accept). In accordance with Najma's narration, her sense of gratitude toward the system is also paired with ambivalence, as this well-functioning system fails to give her what she really needs.

HAALA: Yes, Sweden is a very good country in order to develop (yourself). You can go to school to learn, you get what you need ... I just miss my family now, my mom, otherwise everything is fine.

(Somali girl 120124 page 10)

Haala points to similar understandings when she talks of her experiences of being received in Sweden. For her Sweden is highlighted as catering to the practical needs of children by offering good educational possibilities and assistance when needed. Haala narrates contentment and satisfaction but also that she only misses her mother, otherwise things are fine. Evident in her short extract is her position as satisfied with her current life even though she, just like Najma, also has specific needs such as the longing for her mother that troubles her.

In Malik, Najma and Haala's quotes a narrative of a grateful, content and respectable young subject is put to the fore. Their positioning opposes the conceptualization of the unaccompanied minor as a possibly erratic subject hard to work with that was articulated by some of the officials and support staff interviewed in Chapters 6 and 7, but also in public and official narrations where unaccompanied minors are constructed as ambivalent subjects. Malik explicitly positions himself as different from such hard-to-work-with youngsters by stating that some unaccompanied minors are problematic, but that he is not one of them. By stressing their contentment the three youngsters also position themselves as not asking too much of the Swedish system, hence also objecting to the image of unaccompanied minors as demanding, which was underscored by some caregivers in Chapter 7.

Najma and Haala's constructions seem much more ambivalent than Malik's with regard to articulating a discourse on Sweden or a Swedish reception system of unaccompanied minors, as they also speak to how the unaccompanied subject has needs and wishes that cannot be complied by the system, which is their desire to be united with their parents and loved ones.

8.3.2 Accepting the situation

In Haala's narration in the previous section, she distinguishes between what she constructs as structural factors of a more general character (the conditions in Sweden) and what she constructs as of personal concern to herself (her longings). What Najma constructs as a general situation common to many unaccompanied minors (the absence of parents) Haala, on the contrary, conceptualizes as a difficult situation specific to her. She also minimizes the impact of her longing by taking some of the edge off ("otherwise everything is fine").

NAJMA: And one cannot do much about (not being reunited with one's parents in Sweden) it anyway. It's just to accept it and move on, just try to think that maybe sometime I will meet my parents again. Because I think that unaccompanied youngsters are very strong individuals who manage to cope with this all by themselves, it's quite incredible really and I have huge respect for them who manage without their parents and who struggle with their life. Some youngsters cannot even cope with that. Honestly, I have seen young people who've grown up in a (home with both parents), every time they encounter a little problem (they're) just planning to commit suicide. You see, they become suicidal just because of a little problem, But I'm not trying to say that they aren't strong, everybody has their own problems and you simply cannot compare your own life or your own problems to someone else's, but I believe in hanging in there, taking one day at a time or one step before the other. Everything comes to an end at some point anyway.

(Somali girl 120112 page 20)

According to Najma, the best way to handle the situation of not being reunited with her parents, is to not give up hope that someday she will be reunited with them but also to accept her present situation: "one cannot do much about (being reunited with one's parents in Sweden)". Alongside other unaccompanied minors, Najma's is the object of an incomprehensible asylum system. In order to survive the best strategy is to accept her fate and keep hoping. In Najma's quote the unaccompanied youngster is re-constructed as a subject enduring separation and loneliness ("unaccompanied youngsters are very strong individuals who manage to cope with all this by themselves") while hoping for the best. For her the unaccompanied minor subject is a survivor of harsh circumstances, forced to rely on themselves for survival. This is clearly a respectable subject worthy of the respect and admiration of others. (When Najma narrates her respectfulness she somewhat distances herself from this concept like she is talking of someone else.)

The unaccompanied minor is positioned as opposing other youths having grown up with their parents, who according to Najma cannot handle even the smallest problem. Najma's re-articulation or alternative construction objects to the image of difficult and erratic unaccompanied minors put to the fore by Malik.

AKRAM: I stayed (in the first foster home) for about two months, and then I moved away. When I spoke about (incidents in the first foster home), I think it might have caused bad luck and maybe it was my own fault that I didn't remain in the group home from the beginning. This is why I am forced to move around all the time.

(Afghan boy 111212 page 5)

In Akram's quote he recalls how he was re-placed to another foster home after having told the social services about some incidences in his first family. Since then Akram has been re-placed several times. What is interesting is how Akram seems to narrate what is accentuated as repeated re-placements and upheavals as either due to "bad luck" or to the fact that he did not stay put in the first home. He constructs it as his "own fault", hence blaming himself for the situation he now is in ("forced to move around all the time"). The act of telling the social services and then having to move about is presented as interconnected.

AKRAM: And then for a person, persons such as me who have been through a lot in life and that horribly bad journey that (caused me to) end up here, it's really hard, it's really tough, you don't want to give up really; (one) sees the opportunities. And besides, (the foster parents) used to tell me that if you're moved away from here, (it means) that you've had problems and it may create more problems so that (the Swedish Migration Board) eventually can send you back to Afghanistan.

(Afghan boy 111212 page 3)

Akram positions himself as a person who has endured a lot in life but who still decides not to give up on hope ("you don't want to give up really; (one) sees the opportunities"). He furthermore stresses that his foster parents advised (or threatened) him not to ask the social services to re-place him again, otherwise he could be framed as someone who's had problems, hence risking more misfortune and even deportation.

In Akram's two quotes above it appears that asking the social services for assistance or objecting to one's situation is connected to risking a "troublemaker" label and hence the target of some kind of punishment. Presenting a critique or airing dissatisfaction is seen as acts associated to bad consequenc-

es. In some ways Akram's story echoes Najma's, as the importance of accepting one's destiny is put to the fore as the desirable and suitable way to handle hardship and Malik's framing of troublesome youngsters.

The seemingly different understandings brought forward by Akram, Haala, Najma, and Malik have something in common: they all tell stories of how they frame the system as well-functioning while sometimes giving voice to their needs and wishes that this system somehow fails to cater to. The youngsters also seem to articulate that there are limits to what they can expect or what they can ask of the reception system. With regard to Haala, needs are seemingly emphasized as personal rather than structural; not being able to reunite with her mother is hence Haala's personal loss. Both Najma and Haala distinguish between practical and emotional needs. Malik and Akram's narratives point to the importance of being obedient by not making too much of a fuss; Malik by presenting himself as someone who is compliant with the rules at the HVB facility and Akram by blaming himself for a situation wherein he now appears destined to move about or even risk deportation.

8.3.3 Opposing the image of the dangerous minor

The quotes from the 10 youngsters cited here correspond to other constructions underlined in media and official images, but also as to how officials and support staff come to understand them when they talk about their work with unaccompanied minors. Some, like Malik by distancing himself from "bad behaving minors", while others, like Najma for instance, choose to re-phrase the content of being an unaccompanied minor by stressing their strengths and independence amid other teens.

ALIM: So it's really hard to get in touch with Swedish youths, it's really hard. I don't know ... what the problem is. It's really hard. I've been training a year (with the football team) so I have been one week in the Gothia Cup with the guys ... and I have been to Helsingborg, met Henrik Larsson ... And then we've all slept in a room together and we ate together and everything, but it was very difficult to make contact. I wanted to talk to them about everything, they just sort of ... I was very disappointed. I am an Afghan guy but I'm not dangerous. All that the Swedish youngsters see on television (that someone) kills 1,000 people or I don't know, a bomb or something ... we are not like that. Then I ... sat with some of the guys in my team: "I know I'm an Afghan but I'm not dangerous".

(Afghan boy 120118 page 13)

Alim talks about his experience of trying to make some new friends amongst the Swedish boys in his football team. Although he presents himself as someone who has made great effort (“It’s really hard. I’ve been training a year (with the football team) so I have been one week in the Gothia Cup”, etc.), to make friends is (“really”) challenging as the boys see Alim as a dangerous Afghan. Alim tries to oppose this image by stressing that he is “Afghan but I’m not dangerous”. From his narrative it is evident that being associated with the category of Afghans positions him as an outsider, and that it is hard to convince the other kids that he is essentially a nice guy. Although Alim tries his best to oppose himself or re-construct the image of the dangerous Afghan this seems impossible. Intrinsically, Alim narrates an experience of being ambivalently caught between a generalized Swedish conceptualization of the Afghan subject (i.e., being a dangerous bomber or murdering 1,000 people) and his own Afghan-looking appearance (Cf. Fanon 1997). How Alim positions himself and his experiences appear subordinate to the other kids on his team, as they only see him as a boy with what they thinly and stereotypically constructs as essentially Afghan qualities (Cf. The quote made by the foster parent Kristina in Chapter 6.1.1).

8.4 Concluding remarks

What the 10 youngsters talk about in this chapter are their different experiences of having to adjust to images positioning them as a group of somewhat problematic subjects, sometimes as strategic migrants, at other times too demanding, ungrateful and erratic youngsters, or as “dangerous Afghans” and poor victims of harsh fates originating from countries constructed as binary opposites to Sweden. The youngsters position themselves as respectable refugees with regard to these problematizations either by talking about themselves as victims yet survivors of harsh fates, by stressing that their ordeals have been tough (without giving details), or by highlighting that they would never have come to Sweden if the situation “back there” was not intolerable. How they somehow felt obliged to legitimize their presence here appears to be a joint experience between them. Their stories could be analyzed as corresponding to the public and official narrations set out in Chapters 4 and 5, where constructions ambiguously viewing unaccompanied minors as possible illegitimates, strategic migrants or passive victims are accentuated (Cf. Stretmo 2010; Eastmond and Ascher 2011). With regard to the official and media problematizations, the narratives provided hence work to re-position

all 10 as legitimate refugees or deserved, yet also as active subjects in charge of their own lives (Cf McRobbie 2007).

In their narratives a discourse on Sweden and Swedishness as a well-functioning system and safe haven and as a rule-based “distance society” coexist. In their interviews “being the newcomer to Sweden” equalizes loneliness and the risk of making a fool of oneself or of feeling shame for not having the proper skills or knowledge. Different qualities of what is accentuated as Swedishness are therefore desirable and normalized, and something to aim for in order to pass in Sweden (i.e., improving one’s Swedish language skills or doing well in football).

Some of the narratives provide an illustration of how the youngsters strive to re-position themselves within the discourse of the unaccompanied minor. This was sometimes done by highlighting positive aspects of migrantness amidst Swedishness, yet at other times by presenting themselves as decent exceptions within a group of problematic youngsters. One of the interviewed girls, Najma, even to some extent re-constructed the category of the unaccompanied minor by underlining how the unaccompanied minor is more independent and emotionally stronger than her Swedish-born peers due to their specific experiences. In this she concurrently made a claim for recognition and respect on behalf of other unaccompanied children migrating on their own.

What appears evident in all of the quotes is how the youngsters see themselves as determined, hardworking and active subjects, either about their school achievements, language training or in order to make Swedish friends, but also how they emphasize their own responsibility to “make it in Sweden”. These self-narrations are comparable to what Skeggs (2000) puts forth as part of the white, British, feminine and *respectable* working-class ethos. The obligation to make it in Sweden also mirror what Rose (1999), McRobbie (2007) and Miller and Rose (2008) construct as in tune with the neo-liberal requirement of individuals to construct a good life for themselves and to make the right choices, hence avoiding becoming a potential burden on society. Rendered invisible in such an official narrative is the fact that the prerequisites needed to construct a good life are not equally distributed.

Accepting one’s fate and being grateful in return and not making too much fuss appear to be another common narration amongst the youngsters. Making a fuss or not obliging is put to the fore as connected to risks of being positioned as a demanding or problematic unaccompanied minor. Yet, accepting one’s fate, not making too much fuss could be articulated as playing according to the rules, thus possibly making life as an unaccompanied minor a little bit easier.

The public and official conceptualization I analyze in Chapters 4 and 5, and in interviews with caregivers implies a specific Norwegian and Swedish “gaze” on unaccompanied minors, ultimately seeing them as ambivalent subjects, sometimes as traumatized victims yet at other times as problematic or strategic subject that are difficult to handle. Evident in public and official narrations, and in how caregivers spoke about unaccompanied minors, were also the actions and practice emphasized as legitimate and necessary when handling unaccompanied children and youngsters given these problematizations. The youngsters interviewed here seem to have internalized this Swedish and Norwegian gaze. This made them evaluate, judge, control, and suppress their own behavior and desires in order to avoid being placed in this shameful category. This process mirrors Fanon’s (1997) thoughts on the “colonized self” and is also analogous to how the white British working-class women in Skeggs’s (2000) classical study internalize the judgemental gaze of the middle class: when the subordinated strives to achieve the normalized or superior position, the relation of power (i.e., Swedishness amidst migrantness) risks being upheld and reproduced. In some sense the youngsters’ emphasis on trying to get by in Sweden by not making any trouble or striving to achieve Swedish normality, point to the limited subject positioning’s available to them in order gain approval and recognition from the Swedish society. Being the “migrant” or the “unaccompanied minor” is clearly a problematic ascribed subject positioning connected to feelings of inadequacy (Cf. Fanon 1997; Hammarén 2008). Yet, at other times the youngsters could also accentuate Swedishness as a cold and rigid construct opposed to a sense of “immigrantness”, where closeness and sociability were accentuated. By doing this they re-articulate unaccompanied minors as strong individuals and reconstruct the value of the unaccompanied minor or the migrantness they prescribed to themselves and others.

9

Unaccompanied minors in media, policy and practice

One important lesson that this study implies is that our social world rarely comprises of one joint interpretation of a given social phenomenon, but that many possible understandings or readings coexist, even within a given discourse. The different subject positions, ambivalences and narratives within a discourse are also part of a continuant meaning construction aiming to define, redefine and interpret the issue at hand. The discourse on unaccompanied minors is illustrated, for instance, by a variety of different constructions and images that coincide with public and official narrations, and also in the everyday micro context. Another important lesson that this study indicates is that although a variety of ambivalences, opposing images or possible readings exist simultaneously, there are limitations and constrictions to them. This is illustrated by how the unaccompanied children and youngsters are often positioned or problematized with regard to specific social problems or in how the handling of them implies and/or favors specific actions or conduct above others.

In this chapter, I summarize my main findings and discuss them in relation to my research aims and questions outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis. My central objective is to examine how unaccompanied minors have been singled out as a specific group of refugees in Norway and Sweden in narratives on missing unaccompanied minors in the media and policy, and in more general Norwegian and Swedish policies on unaccompanied minors. The problematizations emphasized transform them into a specific field to be governed or managed according to public and official understandings and articulated “programs of governing”. Central to this analysis is also to study the official narrations and conduct of how caregivers involved in the regional and municipal reception of unaccompanied minors talk about their work with unaccompanied minors. Governing at a distance involves a translation process where the programs of governing (the packaging of official and public understandings and solutions to problems) are transported through various

levels of society (Miller and Rose 2008). The dominant views in Norway and in Sweden are interesting backdrops to the analysis of how caregivers such as officials and support staff talk about their work with unaccompanied minors, and who readily position them within the dominant views and understandings. How the unaccompanied youngsters talk about and give meaning to their experiences within this categorization offers further insights and important problematizations. In this respect I also turn to my overall research questions highlighted in Chapter 1, section 1.1 in order to answer them.

In the first part of Chapter 9, I discuss the implications of some of the conclusions I made in the analysis of the Norwegian and Swedish media and policy (Chapters 4 and 5). I connect these constructions and important narratives to the interview study conducted with officials and support staff working with unaccompanied minors (Chapters 6 and 7) and ten youngsters, categorized as unaccompanied (Chapter 8). Lastly, I summarize and discuss the implications of my main findings and conclusions.

9.1 Tales of strategic migrants and vulnerable victims in public narrations and official policy

Firstly, I will take a look at the public and official narratives and the corresponding problems that were highlighted of unaccompanied minors in a comparison between Norway and Sweden.

9.1.1 “missings” as an important narration within the discourse on unaccompanied minors

In Chapter 4, I analyze how narratives of missing unaccompanied minors became an angle of incidence in order to put the specific needs of children and youngsters seeking asylum on their own on the political agenda in Norway and Sweden.

In the analysis of newspaper articles, I point out three distinct problematizations of unaccompanied minors who go missing from official registration: 1) the Norwegian concept of the missing asylum-seeking child, as a case of any missing child (2000-2005); 2) the Swedish articulation of the exploited and at-risk child in the aftermath of the Carlslund scandal (2002-2005); and 3) the joint Swedish and Norwegian framing of the vanished Chinese children as cases of a problem of irregular migration from 2005 onward.

Whereas the Norwegian problematization from 2000-2005 stressed the similarities between children and hence Norwegian society's specific obligations toward them, the Swedish concept of the exploited child stressed differences between groups of children due to gender (constructed as specific "gendered risks") and ethnicity ("new groups" of child migrants).

The Norwegian articulation accentuated unaccompanied minors as rights-holders due to their status as children. Though this narration drew on a perception where children can be analyzed as active and creative subjects, the conceptualization also constructed children as passive objects and essentially different from adults: to be cared for by adults but also protected from adults. According to Ariès (1962/1973), Cunningham (1995), Jenks (1996), and Meyer (1997), the discourse on the "innocent child" that emerged with Romanticism, framed children as inherently virtuous and nearly angelic beings in need of parental or adult protection. This perception of children and of childhood replaces and even opposes the earlier view of the child as an inherently evil being (i.e., original sin) and hence in need of discipline and punishment. In order to preserve their innocence, children were conceptualized as in need of protection from polluted adult practices such as work and/or sexuality (Cf. Foucault 2002). According to Meyer (1997), the constructions of innocence and the passive child have continued to dominate official understandings and conceptualizations of instances such as paedophilia and sexual abuse. This claim is powerful, suggesting permanent and irreversible damage to the child if they are exposed to adult sexuality (Meyer 1997:95). In the Norwegian narration, exposed risk of sexual abuse or other abusive situations were set out as possible dangers facing missing unaccompanied minors. Central to this framing is also the homogenization of the differences that could coexist between different children due to, for example, age, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality in order to package them within a space where children's rights and needs are emphasized.

The Swedish problematization of missing unaccompanied minors as children as passive objects in need of protection slightly differs from the Norwegian perception. In the aftermath of the Swedish Carlslund scandal (2002), the unaccompanied minor was seen as an exploited child in risk of further sexual exploitation. In comparison to the Norwegian narration, Swedish newspaper articles from 2002-2005 focused on the possible fates of what was highlighted as already damaged or sexually exploited children, hence stressing differences between groups of children. This differentiation referenced rather stereotypical features of gender, ethnicity and so forth. I argue that this worked as a process of "othering", framing them as subjects alien to the Swedish context or to Swedish children and youngsters. The articles also

highlighted why the missing child ended up in Sweden in the first place by connecting their stories to forms of migration or groups of migrants (street children, social orphans, etc.) migrating from Eastern European countries.

The narrative of the vanished Chinese minors (2005-2008) in both Swedish and Norwegian newspaper articles packages the cases of “missings” within the field of irregular migration-related phenomena such as trafficking and smuggling. In this sense the unaccompanied minor is seen as undecided: in some sense a passive object or a possible victim of trafficking, but as strategic conduct from an active subject (whether it be the children themselves or from smugglers or traffickers lurking behind the scenes) were implied, concurrently also an ambivalent subject.

What the three Norwegian and Swedish newspaper narrations held in common was the manner in which demands of liability were directed organizational matters concerning the reception unaccompanied minors. System changes and/or softer schemes were requested, yet actions and more rational strategies in order to safeguard unaccompanied minors (and borders) by increased monitoring and control were also emphasized.

Norwegian and Swedish authorities (from 2000-2010) responded to the media problematizations by: 1) presenting counterclaims/alternative interpretations; 2) adopting some of the features from the media lines; and 3) underlining connections between irregular forms of migration and instances of missing unaccompanied minors, hence constructing missings as practice or modus operandi associated with trafficking and/or smuggling. With regard to cases of missings, the Norwegian and Swedish official understandings did not draw on the Norwegian newspaper articles (2000-2005) that set out missing unaccompanied children as unique rights holders due to their status as any other child. Instead, they were highlighted (more in line with the Swedish newspaper articles from 2002-2005) as a group of possibly already exploited and exposed children. These narratives connected the ethnic and gendered features of the child to specific risks, thus underlining, for instance, unaccompanied girls as more exposed than boys. Other missings were categorized as involuntary missings by Swedish and Norwegian authorities, articulated as connected to the problem of irregular migration (i.e., trafficking and/or smuggling). The official narrations furthermore connected missings to strategic asylum behavior. The missing, or the voluntary absconder, was a problematic figure constituting a potential danger to the asylum system.

Concurrent to the demands that were raised in the Norwegian and Swedish media, official actions and system changes aiming to safeguard unaccompanied children were also emphasized by the two countries' authorities. Transference of the revision of the care dimensions from the Swedish Migra-

tion Board and Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare and the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat) was important. This was paralleled by a responsabilization of the municipal services such as social services, schools, and home for care and housing (HVB) in order to care for unaccompanied children and minors.

Simultaneously, a necessity to coordinate joint surveillance to monitor possible strategic migrants was also stressed by officials. In this sense Swedish and Norwegian problematizations drew on the classical concept of children as passive objects in the hands of adults, but also of the “Dionysian child”, in other words a problematic and unreliable subject in need of guidance, supervision and discipline. This points to how missing unaccompanied children become a “double exposure” in Swedish and Norwegian official narrations: a potential security issue in the asylum system and as vulnerable subjects in need of protection and care.

The governing of missing unaccompanied minors in this sense is clearly connected to apparatuses of security and border control, that is the development of new and more rationally operating schemes in order to separate the deserved from the undeserved subjects (Cf. Fassin 2005; Watters 2007: 414) and to a call for the construction of novel technologies or new techniques (technological governing) (Cf. Miller and Rose 2008) in order to aid joint border intelligence or international cooperation. By establishing enhanced and more predictive data on migrants in order to distinguish the possible absconders from vulnerables, Norwegian and Swedish authorities strove to achieve enhanced control. This illustrates how missings could be connected to a Swedish and Norwegian sense of control loss in territorial and border surveillance, but also to their governing of asylum seekers and irregular migration flows (Cf. Brekke (2004). The transforming of missings as a part of a discourse on irregular migration is another feature of both the public and the official problematizations that has interesting implications. This process is associated with the overall societal framing of migration and migrants as security risks, but might also indicate a discursive shift from a focus on asylum and human rights in the discourse of unaccompanied minors to one on irregular migration and a far more restrictive scheme (Cf. Fassin 2005; 2007).

9.1.2 The concept of age in public narration and official policy in Sweden and Norway

In my second case study, which I analyze in Chapter 5, I study how unaccompanied minors were put to the fore as a specific group of asylum seekers

in Swedish and Norwegian policies. This case differed from the analysis of media and official narrations of missings, as it aims to take a much more comprehensive view on how unaccompanied minors were seen in a broader sample of Norwegian and Swedish policy.

What is evident in this examination is that unaccompanied children were constructed as vulnerables with regard to their status as children separated from their next of kin and as subjects essentially different from adults. Being separated and constructed as a subject essentially different positions the unaccompanied minor as a group in need of separation from adult asylum seekers and refugees, and instead receiving a different reception. It further points to the explicit obligations that Swedish and Norwegian societies have.

In Chapter 4, I demonstrate how much of the official Swedish and Norwegian concern with missing unaccompanied children and youngsters, connected to the fact that missing or absconding minors could be related to the “problem” of strategic asylum behavior and/or irregular migration. Similar concerns were expressed with reference to the general Norwegian and Swedish practice regarding unaccompanied minors. Distinguishing them as a group of specific rights holders was considered a rather ambivalent practice. Assigning certain subjects a specific status clearly risks awakening the official belief that others (i.e., the undeserved) might try to pass as a subject belonging to the deserved category in order to gain benefits and a residence permit.

While similar problematizations were expressed in Swedish and Norwegian policy, there were also interesting differences in how the fear of strategic adults (adult subjects believed to try to pass as children) was expressed in policy. Separating the adults from “real” children becomes an important part of the problem packaging in the discourse of unaccompanied minors in both Norway and Sweden. This problematization is also done with regard to the development of specific technologies or to technological governing, which aims to enable programs of governing directed at unaccompanied minors in practice. Norway implemented obligatory age assessment tests, transforming “age” into a biological fact readable through the bone tissue of the subject claiming to be underage. In Sweden, Swedish Migration Board officers ask custodians, HVB staff and teachers, for example, to give their opinion on the probability or likelihood of the age stated by the unaccompanied minor. In Swedish practice the validation of age is made into a question of assessing maturity.

Swedish and Norwegian practice points to what Finch (2005), Valentin and Knudsen (1995), Watters (2008, 2012), Andersson et al. (2005, 2010), and Kohli (2006, 2007) articulate as the climate of distrust, where unaccom-

panied minors (alongside other groups of asylum seekers) are met with general distrust by authorities. Asylum seekers are met with suspicion as to their status as possible refugees, but unaccompanied minors are also met with doubt about their claim of being underage or in fact children. In this sense the construct of biological age, and the implementation of the 18 years of age limit for asylum seekers, is extremely important in official practice. The use of biometrical age assessment methods in Norway, or the analysis of behavior and appearance markers in Sweden, demonstrates how the two countries adopt novel techniques in order to distinguish the adult subjects from the children. Moreover, these governing practices display how the testimonies of asylum seekers are continually met with disbelief amid these techniques. The technologies of governing function as apparatuses that work to include child subjects yet exclude adult subjects in order to render a program governing of unaccompanied minors possible and in accordance with the official problematizations.

In the Swedish and Norwegian framing the question of age for unaccompanied minors is connected to a discourse on “vulnerability” (Cf. O’Connell Davidsson and Farrow 2007; Eastmond and Ascher 2011). Children are given their special status due to their positioning as vulnerables, those without the care and support of parents and as dependent and fragile objects in comparison to adult subjects. Malkki (1995) argues that adult refugees have historically been constructed as out-of-place subjects, traumatized sufferers and as constituting anomalies to the “natural order” of fixed national borders and citizens. With reference to the issue at stake here — the discourse on the unaccompanied minor — it is interesting to see how the sense of strangeness is furthermore accentuated by the fact that as unaccompanied the child is outside what is constructed as its natural context, in other words the family (Cf. Thronson 2002; Engebriksen 2002, 2012). Unaccompanied minors hence constitute anomalies with reference to their positioning as refugees, but also in their separatedness. Positioned as a child, a migrant and separated highlights the vulnerability of the unaccompanied minor, which is a double or even triple exposure. In Norway and Sweden this conceptualization, alongside the fear of missings, paves the way for a novel scheme in the reception of unaccompanied minors. The separation of the “investigative” versus the “care” tasks in Norway (from 2007-) and Sweden (from 2006-) becomes rational and pertinent given how children are constructed as subjects with different needs and positioned in a governable space different (and separated and protected) from adults.

In order to handle the ambivalence of the double or even triple exposure of the unaccompanied child, the separation of rationalities seem justified: as a migrant and asylum seeker the asylum claim raised by the unaccompanied minor must be dealt with by the scrutinizing eyes of the Swedish Migration Board or the UDI. However, as a vulnerable child with needs and rights, it is also a subject to be dealt with and safeguarded by caregivers.

The singling out of unaccompanied minors as deserved due to their status as separated children also points to how children are rarely constructed as having genuine asylum claims or rarely obtain refugee status (Cf. Engebriksen 2002, 2012). This also come to construct the unaccompanied youngsters as more ambivalent than what intrinsically is accentuated as the real children, as young people are often considered more independent and less fragile than vulnerable children, yet not as capable and independent as adults.

In the Norwegian context unaccompanied youngsters are singled out as somewhat different from unaccompanied children under 15. Those between 15-18 years of age are still the recipients of daily care and supervision by the UDI, while those under 15 are the targets of the municipal social services under Bufetat's supervision. In the Swedish context all subjects under 18 years of age are considered children, and hence under the authority of the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, ultimately to be cared for by the municipalities. This is not to say that divisions between younger and older unaccompanied minors are never made in the Swedish practice, as unaccompanied youngsters are more frequently found suitable for re-placement in HVB facilities, a re-placement alternative that is simultaneously articulated as rather inappropriate for younger children who are primarily resettled in foster families (Cf. Eriksson 2010; Socialstyrelsen 2013b).

With regard to an intersectional scrutiny this accentuates how the age dimension operates in and between different groups of migrants or asylum seekers in the Norwegian and Swedish contexts (Cf. Matsson 2010). The dichotomy of adults versus children is clearly normalized within the policies analyzed here and rather uncontested. As dichotomies operate; the one cannot operate without the other, the accentuating of the *vulnerability* of children hence also implicitly to some extent accentuates the *invulnerability* of adults. This excludes or obscures a possible debate for the need for a softer scheme directed or including all asylum seekers, as it is the conceived vulnerability of children (the deserving) that are put to the fore. The manner in which age is constructed within policy gives very different and very real consequences for the subject labeled an adult or child. Chronological age (expressing an increase in biological maturity and/or independence), with regard to a discourse on unaccompanied minors, becomes an important determinant that

might decide whether or not the subject can obtain a residence permit. The age dimension seemingly overrides the impact of other possible social dimensions working between different migrants or asylum seekers such as gender, class and ethnicity. This also highlights how chronological age is a determinant that positions migrant subjects rather unevenly to the resources and possible privileges provided during their asylum process and beyond.

Furthermore, evident in both the Swedish and Norwegian problematizations are that chronological age can be differently constructed depending on the space and context in which the unaccompanied child is positioned. The subject constructed as a possible strategic migrant in the asylum process can concurrently be highlighted as a vulnerable adult when and if they obtain a permanent residence. The understanding of the age of majority (18 years of age) as a final rite de passage transforming the dependent child into an independent adult is hence contextually constructed and upheld. The notion of adults as intrinsically self-sufficient and autonomous is contested and renegotiated in the integration space, where young unaccompanied adults are singled out as subjects with special needs and legitimate requirements due to their possible vulnerable position in a new society, lack of social network, former traumatic experiences, lack of education, and so forth. This also indicates that the intersectional analysis of migration policies must pay close attention to the importance of the specific context (i.e., being in the asylum process versus having obtained a residence permit) in order to see how, for example, the different dimension of class, gender and ethnicity intersect and operate (processes of inclusion and/or exclusion) between different subjects (Cf. Back 1997; Watters 2008).

This argument is also important with regard to findings made by Wettergren and Wikström (2013) and Stretmo and Melander (2013), who point to how the official framing of the country of origin, are found to carry precedence over, for example, age, gender, class, sexuality, disability of the asylum seeker. Although children are pointed out as vulnerables, which entitles them to a specific reception, this vulnerability does not automatically grant them the right to permanent stay.

9.2 Caring for an ambivalent subject — governing in practice

The narratives and constructions provided by caregivers, set out in Chapters 6 and 7, give additional insights into how unaccompanied minors are constructed and re-constructed in the form of ascribed subject positionings. These interviews are furthermore interesting with reference to the storylines and problematizations or program of governing put to the fore in the media and policy, as they also might shed some light on the process of translation (governing at a distance).

When the caregivers spoke about and gave meaning to the discourse on the unaccompanied minor they held a repertoire of various constructions and interpretations. These different subject positioning's were clearly connected to many of the official or public themes or problematizations that I analyze in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

Sometimes the officials and support staff objected to the strategic and/or problematic conception of unaccompanied minors by highlighting them as respectable exceptions to other problem categories or as possible assets to Swedish society. While these understandings can be seen as aiming to re-position the unaccompanied subject, or specific unaccompanied minors, they also tend to draw on and consolidate stereotypical ideas of immigrants, problem youth or unaccompanied minors. At other times, the officials and support staff's narratives focused on the unaccompanied minor' status as a problematic sufferer or a youngster in need of extra compensatory pedagogics or tactics in order to overcome educational or cultural shortcomings. Unaccompanied minors were also accentuated as gendered beings: officials and support staff did often refer to them as boys or young men. At other times, it was rather what were articulated as "specific problems" in relation to unaccompanied girls that were put to the fore. When speaking about unaccompanied minors as girls, they were often narrated as girls of Somali origin, a positioning that held specific connotations.

This framing can be analyzed as part of the packaging of the unaccompanied minor as a specific subject of knowledge in official images that often tend to highlight the gender and age of unaccompanied minors. I argue that the stressing of the teenage and unaccompanied boy as the archetypical unaccompanied minor — often emphasized in Norwegian and Swedish official and public discourse and narratives by officials and support staff — can be examined as steps in order to question the presumed vulnerability of this

particular group, but also to stress the different needs that can coexist between groups of heterogeneous youngsters.

In the context of stricter schemes and a hostile media climate, the closing of “doors” often implies a re-articulation of vulnerability or who is to be categorized as “deserved” or not. The focus on the unaccompanied boy as a young man questions his vulnerability with regard to age, but also with regards to gender, as men rarely are considered as constituting “real victims” (Cf. Christie 2001; Burcar 2005; O’Connell Davidson 2006; Hammarén 2008). In this regard there is a tendency to construct unaccompanied girls as exception cases, but also as more vulnerable and in need of different support than boys. Stretmo and Melander (2013) illustrate how unaccompanied girls more often were found to be re-situated in specialized HVB units as their first placement, while boys more frequently were being re-placed in transit units that had less staff and catered to more children than the girls.

The focus of gender and age in the interviews can simultaneously also underscore the need to pay attention to possible differences operating between children that coherently are important to address, such as how, for example, intersections of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability offer children different routes of access and resources in the receiving country.

In the interviews conducted here, there were silences regarding for instance the impact of disabilities but also different sexualities. When unaccompanied minors were accentuated as a young Muslim or Afghan boy this was frequently done in relation to what was problematized as a reactionary and potentially sexually aggressive heterosexual masculinity. The Somali girl on the contrary was positioned as a submissive femininity, and as a binary opposition to what was consequently set forth as modern Swedish femininity. Young unaccompanied boys and girls were hence articulated as the targets of gendered compensatory tactics in order for them to make it right in Sweden: the Muslim or Afghan boys were the target of tactics aiming to teach them how to respect Swedish women and girls. The Somali girls, on the other hand, were to be taught the importance of postponing pregnancies, choosing education and having a career over having babies too early. Concurrently, the unaccompanied boys and the girls were highlighted as a group constructed as driven by a heterosexual desire. When the officials and support staff talked about migrantness they drew on popular understandings of “we” versus “them” (Wikström 2009). Framings of Afghan boys and Somali girls that tend to emphasize the difference between what were constructed as male/female and heterosexual Swedishness versus the male/female and heterosexual migrantness of the unaccompanied minors. These constructs were also accentuated as binary oppositions, where the categorization of otherness

with regard to migrantness also envisions the normality of what was Swedishness.

The ethnic and gendered framing of unaccompanied minors is interesting to analyse, as they demonstrate how intersections of stereotypes become intertwined in the problematization of a current issue. The specific problem articulation of Afghan boys and Somali girls also makes specific actions legitimate in the caregivers' interviews, yet concurrently silencing other aspects that would have fore-front other differences and/or similarities working between unaccompanied minors.

Within the different problematizations the officials and support staff constructed unaccompanied minors as either in need of supportive or more care-oriented strategies or of more disciplining or controlling tactics. With reference to the official and public problem definitions, the caregivers also draw upon the ambivalent constructions put to the fore, which also singled out the unaccompanied minor as the object of specific strategies at the micro level, somewhat mirroring the ones argued for in official and public talk. Though the official and public programs of governing sometimes opted for control strategies such as a restriction of freedom and close supervision either to monitor problematic subjects or safeguard vulnerables, the officials and support staff's narrations highlight the need for unaccompanied minors to learn how to be self-sufficient, economize, be hard working, not make too much fuss, and be grateful for whatever they receive. This kind of preparedness could be analyzed as drawing on similar societal values that Skeggs (2000) argues constitute part of the white British working-class ethos, but were also connected to values establishing distinctions between what could be framed as the deserved versus undeserved receivers of support and care (Cf. Thompson 1971). When the unaccompanied minors were positioned as a group of demanding youngsters (i.e., not hard working, making a fuss, being ungrateful) additional restrictive measures were deemed legitimate.

It is interesting in this regard to analyze how the caregivers active in a public care system of unaccompanied minors tend to narrate the services they offer as somewhat conditional and dependent on different kinds of redistribution such as gratitude or compliance. According to Jansdotter (2004), the field of social work has always had a double functioning where the helping aspects are intertwined with controlling aspects, and where the imbalance of power offer receivers versus their caregivers different interpretative space. This also highlights how the conduction of care work in the broadest sense (e.g., teaching, social work, providing the unaccompanied minors with clothing, food and housing, aiding them in Swedish society) can be analyzed as part of the governing of "perfect citizens". This is a process that aims to so-

cialize the subject into a healthy, hard-working and employable individual (see e.g., Chapter 2, section 2.4.2), ultimately securing a social development or socialization in accordance with a prevailing public and official climate (Cf. McRobbie 2007; Rose 1999; Miller and Rose 2008). This is also part of a governing wherein individuals and unaccompanied minors are responsible for making the right choices, hence obscuring the structural differences that offer subjects unequal access or resources. As the failure to become a self-catering, hard-working consumer tends to be individualized, so were success stories to some extent constructed as individual exceptions amongst the unaccompanied minors in the caregivers' narratives.

In the school system unaccompanied minors were constructed as motivated yet challenged by what teachers and pedagogues articulated as the children and youngsters' educational shortcomings, but also by what officials and support staff sometimes articulated as "exclusion within inclusion" (Cf. Pinson, Arnot and Candappa 2010). Although they are granted access to schooling (inclusion) according to their individual needs just like every other child and youngster in Sweden, they are also enrolled in introductory educational programs separated (excluded) from what some of the interviewed teachers labeled the "normal" or "Swedish" class (see *Ibid*; but also Bunar 2010 for similar findings). Some caregivers hence problematized what they articulated as a sub-group in Swedish schools with few Swedish friends and less resources. Compensatory pedagogics were often emphasized as important tools in order to overcome the deficiencies of unaccompanied minors. Though the interviewed teachers often constructed the possible learning difficulties with regard to overall factors, such as youngsters having little access to former education, the challenge of learning a new language, was also a tendency to render possible structural factors invisible and frame the unaccompanied minors as less interested in education. Though the claim of lack of interest was challenged by other teachers who stressed the particular motivation of unaccompanied minors in comparison to Swedish students, the teachers agreed on the possible difficulties facing unaccompanied minors in the Swedish school system and in Swedish society. Some teachers framed it as imperative to work to lower the expectations of the unaccompanied minors by making them look more realistically at their prospects. As research often suggests that teachers' aspirations are important facilitators of children's educational achievement, one can question whether working to diminish someone's prospects intrinsically risks re-positioning and reproducing them as potential underdogs in the school system rather than supporting them.

Unaccompanied minors as a specific subject of knowledge could also be differently defined. Contrary to the image of unaccompanied minors as troublesome or in need of compensatory tactics, another articulation was also underlined. Sometimes, in the media, policy and in some of the interviews conducted with officials and support staff, unaccompanied minors were also conceptualized as specific rights holders due to their positioning as a case of any other child (Cf. Jenks 1996). When leveled as any other child the focus is on situational factors like being in the asylum system without the support of parents, or the risk of losing official support when turning 18. Attention was also directed at what was explained as a period of natural turmoil (a transitional period due to puberty, etc.) generalizable to any other children. The instance of making a fuss, associated with demanding unaccompanied youngsters or traumatized sufferers, could then be re-conceptualized as an expression of an adolescent in the process of liberation. When re-positioned as any other child, structural factors working in the disfavor of unaccompanied minors could also be addressed. Hence creating a space where calls for a more just asylum system and where the need for a more generous and softer and child-friendlier reception of unaccompanied minors, prolonged care and the importance of creating close and enduring relationships were emphasized.

The understanding of unaccompanied minors as constituting a case of any other child illustrates a possible ambiguity or resistance within the discourse of unaccompanied minors that might give alternative explanations and bring the legitimacy of dominant views into questioning.

9.3 Positioning oneself as a respectable refugee

In Chapter 8, I present my analysis of nine interviews conducted with a group of 10 young people about their experiences of being categorized as unaccompanied minors. Their narratives were interesting as the youngsters positioned themselves with respect to some of the public and official narrations but also with regard to the subject positionings articulated by the caregivers. While their constructions were based on how they made sense of their experiences, their stories could also be analyzed as somewhat re-positioning themselves as respectable subjects with respect to the assigned subject positions. This also worked to oppose some of the constructions of them as problematic held by caregivers and expressed in official and public narratives.

9.3.1 Narratives of Sweden and Swedishness versus migrantness

In the narratives given by the 10 youngsters, Sweden and Swedishness often accentuated in their stories. Sometimes as binary oppositions to what they concurrently construct as features of migrantness or country of origin. Occasionally put to the fore as a safe haven or sanctuary, yet at other times as a strict and distanced society associated with qualities such as rigidity and shyness. Though many of their homeland narratives echoed Eurocentric conceptualizations of Asiatic and African countries as binary oppositions to the West and European countries such as Sweden (Cf. Wikström 2007, 2009; de Los Reyes and Kamali 2005), one of the interviewed boys objected to a stereotypical and one-sided image of his country of origin. Stressing the similarities between Somalia and Sweden rather than highlighting the differences provides an alternative conceptualization. One girl gave some examples of what she constructed as a cold and distant country and Swedishness in comparison to what she articulated as a friendly, sociable and outgoing migrantness. Both the girl and the boy distanced themselves from Sweden and what they put to the fore as Swedishness.

Other youngsters stressed Sweden as synonymous with a well-functioning society, yet also how they strived to pass in Sweden and amongst Swedes by, for example, working hard at school, being a nice and well-mannered individual, attempting to master Swedish, do well in football, and make friends. Aspects related to their framing of Swedishness were also constructed as the norm to which migrantness sometimes was made subordinate or secondary. Being positioned as either the migrant, newcomer or unaccompanied minor was associated with the risk of making a fool of oneself and becoming seen as problematic or even dangerous, too demanding or ungrateful. An unaccompanied minor or migrant was synonymous with the risk of standing out in a negative way and to feel somewhat shameful about.

Evident in the 10 different interviews were also the fact that the youngsters somehow felt obliged to legitimize their presence in Sweden by retelling some stories about why they chose to flee or something about their flights. The retelling was done either as a tale of how they had struggled to survive harsh circumstances and ordeals, or by stating that the flight had been so terrible that they did not want to talk about it (“telling without talking”, Cf. “the sound of silence” in Kohli 2006; 2007), or even by simply pointing to overall contextual or situational factors (e.g., war in Somalia) that had made life intolerable for them there. According to Watters (2008) and Eide (2005, 2012), there are few legitimate avenues of access with regard to the position-

ing of a refugee subject in receiving countries. In the interviews this is evident in, for instance, what and how they present an account of “why I am here”. The flight narratives position them as respectable refugees or connects them to the official narrations as legitimate refugees. Their very presence “here” is made legitimate due to the retelling of a legitimate flight narrative.

Evident in the storylines is also how the youngsters position themselves as better off now than before with reference to their flight and what is often accentuated as a shocking first encounter with Swedish society. In this sense the youngsters see themselves as the active survivor of harsh circumstances. To some extent the 10 narratives can be analyzed as confirming Sweden and Norway’s self-positioning as democratic and well-functioning societies (Cf. Eide 2012), and as a binary opposition to what is highlighted as undemocratic and chaotic contexts.

9.3.2 between the demanding and the problematic

As stated in the previous section, the youngsters often re-position themselves as respectable exceptions from groups of other unaccompanied minors or what were framed as problematic migrants. This distancing could also be highlighted by stressing their own agency and hard-working character, or by emphasizing their gratitude to Swedish society. Even in narratives where immigrantness was accentuated amid Swedishness, gratefulness toward Sweden or the reception system was also put to the fore. Being too demanding or making a fuss by, for instance, complaining too much were examples of practice that one of the boys said is cornerstone of being positioned as a problematic youngster.

The interviews could be analyzed as illustrative of how being ascribed a shameful positioning awakens feelings of inadequacy or inferiority that make subjects strive to achieve social recognition and acceptance, rather than draw attention to unjust and suppressive structures or systems (Cf. Skeggs 2000). Being ascribed a shameful subject positioning might furthermore rouse resistance or a desire to rearticulate the implications of this positioning. This was accentuated in how, for instance, one of the girls emphasized how unaccompanied minors were stronger than other kids, as they had endured painful conditions and separations from their loved ones. The repositioning of the unaccompanied minor subject as someone who has been made strong, as opposed to extra vulnerable, by being forced to endure also works to underscore them as a respectable group worthy of social recognition.

Accepting one's situation (i.e., coming to terms with never being reunited with their family or only seeing them sporadically) rather than making a fuss was seen as a respectable virtue or the proper manner in which to handle tough conditions and decisions. Evident in the narrations are how the youngsters often positioned themselves as the constructor of their own fortune and well-being, yet consequently how possible hardships (such as being re-placed over and over again or having one's application for family reunion rejected) to some extent were consequently sometimes conceptualized and articulated as one's own fault and an individual suffering rather than the effect of structural conditions.

9.4 What's at stake?

In this thesis, I have analyze the knowledge production with regard to the discourse on unaccompanied minors in Norway and Sweden from 2000-2010 but also some of the consequences this articulation give the subjects categorized as unaccompanied minors. What I demonstrate is a discourse wherein a lot of consensus and agreement about problematizations coexist in Norwegian and Swedish policy and public narrations, but also in how people in the micro context talk about unaccompanied minors.

The securitization of migration in European policy and public debate is clearly a part of these problematizations: the framing of unaccompanied minors in the Swedish and Norwegian media has been a value-added process, where novel understandings are embedded within the problematizations of unaccompanied minors from 2000-2008. Media narrations framed the production of knowledge from a point of view wherein narratives on missing and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are highlighted as an important part of the discourse on unaccompanied minors, and an important angle of incidence in order to underline their specific needs in public debate. In the Norwegian and Swedish media narratives, missing unaccompanied minors have also become connected to issues such as trafficking and smuggling, hence transforming a discussion concerning asylum and asylum rights into a discussion about possible migration related risks and where distinctions are drawn between deserved victims and possible strategic migrants. The media narrations also draw on rather classical dichotomies and stereotypes working to homogenize a group of heterogeneous youngsters in official constructions. Unaccompanied minors are thus positioned as an ambivalent double exposure, neither completely friend nor foe.

Within Norwegian and Swedish policy there is a tendency to create exception spaces for children within the restricted regime rather than question the fairness of the system as such. Instead, a moral economy dividing people and subjects into categories of more or less deserved or undeserved has become embedded within policy and practice. There are dissimilarities with regard to official conduct in practice between Norway and Sweden, one of them being Norway's technological governing such as biometrical age assessment tests versus Sweden's assessment practice conducted in dialogue. The dissimilarities are more a matter of having implemented different methods compared with a slighter toughening of practice in the Norwegian case than an expression pointing to a qualitatively different problematization of the subject at hand.

The programs of governing at the macro level involve both the restriction of freedom and supervision of subjects categorized as unaccompanied minors, but also an opening up of spaces of softer and more child friendly schemes constructed within the asylum system. In the micro context, the same types of "double-bind" operate when caregivers switch between emphasizing the need for more care-oriented yet more control-oriented and restrictive strategies with unaccompanied minors. In their interviews officials and support staff divided unaccompanied minors into categories of more or less deserved subjects, quite comparable to the dominant views expressed within policy and public narratives.

These distinctions were apparent when the caregivers articulated needs and which requirements to address with regard to unaccompanied minors. Some needs such as asking for a new mobile phone or what was accentuated as expensive clothes were deemed as less legitimate and constructed as part of the problematization of the unaccompanied minors as ungrateful subjects.

Yet, another problematization was expressed by some caregivers who set out unaccompanied minors as cases of any other child, hence also re-articulating their needs in accordance to this understanding.

In the constructions made by officials and support staff and in official and public narrations there is a silence concerning the fates and possible futures of children and youngsters who are rejected or deported from Sweden. Missings were often narrated in a similar fashion to the official image of the voluntary absconder, therefore legitimizing that very little action was made on their behalf.

9.4.1 Concluding remarks

Evident in the different narrations highlighted in public, official policy and in talk made by caregivers and youngsters is how stereotypical ideas are often re-constructed, reproduced and re-established within the discourse of unaccompanied minors. Apart from risking objectifying a group of highly heterogeneous children and youngsters this might furthermore de-politicize important political questions and obstruct public scrutiny of the factual consequences of our asylum and reception systems. This includes the importance of raising awareness about the conditions under which asylum seekers are made to endure in their new country of residence, but also after they have been granted a permanent or temporary stay, how rejected asylum seekers are handled and treated, and what and how work is done in order to integrate newly arrived migrants into Swedish and Norwegian societies.

Problematizing and addressing the principles that come to single out some subjects as more deserving than others are important cornerstones to rising public awareness. This points to the need to scrutinize the factual consequences of the asylum system as such.

With regard to the cases analyzed here the impact of such underlying processes are accentuated, for instance, in how some of the interviewees were forced to come to terms with the fact that they will have to experience prolonged separation from their families. The unaccompanied minors are also positioned in a space where they can do very little to assist their loved ones who continue to endure hardship elsewhere.

Another example relates to how the official articulation of unaccompanied minors as vulnerables positions them as subjects without genuine asylum claims. When turning 18 rejected young adults risk deportation from Sweden and Norway, regardless of their reception in the country of origin or third country and regardless of whether or not they have started a new life there.

Instead of questioning the fairness or legitimacy of the system, the governing and handling of the asylum space, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants focus on issues surrounding security (a process sometimes referred to as securitization). This is indicated by the eagerness to safeguard the asylum system from strategic asylum behaviour, and register and control asylum shoppers, Dubliners, or adults constructed as fraudulently trying to pass as children. Another example is how the pursuit to control irregular migration is described in terms of vanquishing or combating smuggling and trafficking. Such conducts are closely related to and risks reproducing the climate of

mistrust. A climate that colors off on the reception of unaccompanied minors in broad segments of the Swedish and Norwegian societies respectively: in official media narrations and in official policy. Furthermore, as is evident in the caregivers' interviews, the climate of mistrust is also imbedded in everyday practice, where unaccompanied minors are sometimes met with suspicion by those working with them. As demonstrated by the three different cases I analyze, this includes how the X-rays of an unaccompanied minor's hands and teeth are considered a more truthful age assessment than their own stories. It also includes ascribing heterogeneous children and youngsters highly stereotypical features and turning them into targets of actions and practice that aim to monitor and control them.

The processes of meaning construction that single out some subjects as more or less deserved shifts the focus from the important discussion about the asylum system. With reference to the youngsters interviewed here the impact of an underlying moral economy is interesting in how they seemingly have come to internalize a Swedish gaze. The youngsters can be seen as seeking approval, recognition and acknowledgement from Swedish society. This implies working to distance oneself from a shameful subject position, rather than drawing attention to or mobilizing against what could be conceptualized as unfair or even discriminating practice.

Summary in Swedish

Denna avhandling sätter sökljuset på hur ensamkommande barn och ungdomar har konstruerats som en särskild grupp av flyktingar och hur de därigenom också skrivits fram som en måltavla för styrning i en norsk och svensk (media och policy) kontext under perioden 2000 till och med 2010. De officiella problematiseringarna analyseras också i förhållande till hur ett urval av omsorgspersoner verksamma i det kommunala mottagandet av ensamkommande barn i Göteborgsregionen talar om ensamkommande barn och ungdomar, samt hur ungdomar och unga vuxna som kategoriserats som ensamkommande barn talar om sina erfarenheter.

Avhandlingen tar sin teoretiska ansats i ett diskursperspektiv där mening ses som skapat genom språkliga handlingar. En diskurs i detta perspektiv uttrycker ett särskilt sätt att se på och tänka om något, men ger också implikationer för hur man bäst kan agera i förhållande till det kunskapsobjekt eller subjekt diskursen beskriver. Diskursen om t.ex. ensamkommande barn bärs upp av motstridiga och ibland ambivalenta berättelser, konceptualiseringar och begreppsliggöranden.

En annan central utgångspunkt för avhandlingen är styrning och hur styrning möjliggörs på olika sätt. Att tala om subjekt på ett särskilt sätt ger också implikationer och skapar möjligheter för hur vi kan agera gentemot dem. Genom att problematisera verkligheten skapas och öppnas det upp ett styrbart utrymme (“governable space”). Styrningen består av en programmatisk (“programmatic governing”) eller diskursiv dimension, kopplat ihop med en teknologisk och operativ dimension (“technological governing”) där särskilda rutiner och tekniker artikuleras som möjliggör en översättning av styrning genom olika samhällsnivåer (“styrning på distans”). Medias roll i skapandet av sociala problem eller officiella problematiseringar är också central för avhandlingen samt också s.k. “kritiskt diskursiva” ögonblick eller perioder där frågor om t.ex. ensamkommande barn hamnat i sökljuset och blivit måltavla för debatt. Hur paketerandet av sociala problem eller problematiseringar i media såväl som i policy görs i förhållande till rådande idéer om ålder, kön, klass och etnicitet, gör slutligen att intersektionalitet också blir en central utgångspunkt för analysen av diskursen om ensamkommande barn i en norsk och svensk kontext.

Avhandlingen baserar sig på tre fallstudier: I fallstudie 1) analyseras och jämförs ett urval tidningsartiklar innehållande berättelser om ensamkommande barn som försvinner spårlöst i Norge och Sverige, 2000 till och med 2008. ”Ensamkommande barn som försvinner spårlöst” visade sig vara ett narrativ som kom att fungera som en ingång för att lyfta frågor om ensamkommande barn på en medieagenda i denna period. Hur frågor om ensamkommande barn som försvann bemöttes och berördes i ett urval av policytexter från Norge och Sverige är också en del av denna analys. I fallstudie 2) analyseras ett bredare urval av policytexter från en norsk och svensk kontext med ett särskilt fokus på hur ensamkommande barn skrivs fram som en speciell grupp bland flyktingar och asylsökande och vilka praktiker detta legitimerade i en jämförelse mellan Norge och Sverige. Fallstudie 3) tar sin utgångspunkt i en intervjustudie där ett urval av 80 lärare, gode män, socialsekreterare, boendepersonal, familjehemsföräldrar och vård- och omsorgspersoner i grupp- samt enskilda intervjuer talar om ensamkommande barn och ungdomar. Fallstudien består också av intervjuer med 10 ungdomar och unga vuxna som kommit till Sverige som s.k. ensamkommande barn, där fokus varit att sätta sökljuset på deras erfarenheter.

Diskursanalysen av tidningsartiklar, policytexter samt intervjumaterial har gjorts genom att ringa in centrala begrepp, vad som sägs eller inte sägs i fråga om begreppen och de konsekvenser den särskilda framställningen ger. Analyser av hur olika begrepp kopplas ihop inom en viss diskurs, hur problematiseringar presenteras inom diskursen, vilka ambivalenser och motsättningar som kommer till uttryck där och vilka berättelser och begreppsbygganden som tillsammans producerar de specifika problematiseringarna, har också varit centralt.

Avhandlingens kapitel 4 samt 5 berör jämförande analyser av svenskt och norskt medie- samt policymaterial.

I kapitel 4 är det analyser av berättelser om ensamkommande barn som försvann spårlöst som är centralt. Fall av ensamkommande barn som försvann spårlöst kom att bli en ingång till att sätta ensamkommande barns särskilda situation på dagordningen i såväl Norge som Sverige. Analysen visar att under perioden 2000 till och med 2005 skilde sig problematiseringarna av försvunna ensamkommande barn åt; i den första perioden sågs ensamkommande barn som försvann som ett fall av ”missing-children” och därigenom som ”vilket barn som helst” Norge har ett särskilt ansvar för. Centralt för detta begreppsbyggande var att betona likheter mellan barn, oavsett deras ursprung, ålder, kön etc. I Sverige problematiserades försvunna ensamkommande barn, i denna första period, först och främst som ”damaged children” eller trasiga och utsatta barn. En problematisering där fall av för-

svinnanden gjordes meningsbärande i förhållande till barnens trasiga hemförhållanden (“social orphans” eller gatubarn) och som fall av att nya (könade och etnifierade) migrantgrupper hade hittat vägen till Sverige (från Östeuropa). I den andra perioden, 2005 till och med 2008, kom problematiseringarna i norsk och svensk dagspress att spegla varandra och fokus kom nu att ligga på fall av s.k. “försvunna kinesiska barn”. De försvunna kinesiska barnen blev nu ihop-buntade med fenomenen som “irreguljär migration” och gjordes meningsbärande som fall av antingen trafficking eller smuggling. Det ensamkommande barnet blir i denna inramning ett ambivalent subjekt, ibland ett offer men samtidigt också en möjlig strategisk migrant. Trots paketering kom fall av ensamkommande barn som försvinner spårlost bli en viktig ingång, i såväl Sverige som Norge under 2000 till och med 2008, för att ställa berörda myndigheter till svars för det som kom att skrivas fram som en bristande hantering och uppföljning av ensamkommande barn. Att i praxis särskilja mellan omsorgs- och kontrollfunktioner i hanteringen av ensamkommande barn och ungdomar och i och med detta lyfta omsorgsdimensionen från Migrationsverket i Sverige och UDI (Utlenningsdirektoratet) i Norge till sociala myndigheter lyftes fram som viktiga åtgärder.

Svensk och norsk policy kom under perioden 2000 till och med 2008 att problematisera försvinnanden på ett något annorlunda sätt, jämfört med medias problematiseringar: fall av försvinnanden kunde här kategoriseras som antingen “frivilliga” eller “ofrivilliga”. De frivilliga försvinnanden sågs som uttryck för strategisk migration och den försvunna därigenom som ett problematiskt subjekt. Ofrivilliga försvinnanden kopplades istället ihop med den svenska mediaproblematikeringen av “damaged children” eller trasiga utsatta barn. För att komma till rätta med försvinnanden, föreslogs såväl fler kontrollåtgärder, såsom bättre övervakningssystem och polisiärt gränsöverskridande samarbete, men också som i svenska och norska media, ett särskiljande av de sociala omsorgsdimensionerna kring ensamkommande barn (skola, boende, vård och omsorg) från de mer kontrollorienterade (utredandet av barnens asylskäl, hanteringen av utvisningar etc.).

I kapitel 5 är det hur ensamkommande barn skrivs fram som en särskild grupp i policy, i en jämförelse mellan Norge och Sverige, som är i fokus. Givet att ensamkommande barn är ensamma (utan föräldrar), under 18 (barn och inte vuxna) och migranter konstrueras de som särskilt behövande, sårbara och utsatta. Det gör också att ensamkommande barn ges speciella rättigheter i Norge och Sverige, såsom god man, rätt till skola och ett barnanpassat boende, en snabbare asylprocess mm. I myndigheternas tal konstrueras det ensamkommande barnet som en binär motsats till den vuxna asylsökaren, vilket också gör att ålder ges en central roll i policy samt i styrningen av

ensamkommande barn. Implicit i konstruktionen av barn som en binär motsats till vuxna, är å ena sidan en förståelse av barn som passiva, beroende av vuxna, sårbara och utsatta, å andra sidan en förståelse av vuxna som aktiva, oberoende och självständiga. Att särskilja de ensamkommande barnen från vuxna är och blir i och med detta också centralt i praxis. I Norge görs detta genom en teknologisk styrning där biometriska ålderstest kommer till användning, i Sverige möjliggörs istället den teknologiska styrningen genom en praktik av samtal som syftar till en mognadsbedömning för att på detta sätt fastställa det ensamkommande barnets sannolika ålder. Implicit ligger en misstro mot de berättelser barnen och ungdomarna uppger, eftersom ålderstesten i den norska kontexten eller rutinerna kring åldersbedömning i Sverige ges större tyngd än den av barnet/ungdomen uppgivna åldern. Underförstådd i policy är också en "rädsla" för ett strategiskt migrerande subjekt, vilket skapar en farhåga om vuxna asylsökande som av taktiska skäl utger sig för att vara barn, men också en ambivalens gentemot ensamkommande ungdomar: konstruerade som ett tvetydigt subjekt, inte ett "riktigt" barn, men inte heller en strategisk vuxen. Denna ambivalens speglas också i en särskiljandets praktik där differentieringar görs mellan grupper av ensamkommande barn: ensamkommande barn över 15 år är t.ex. i det norska systemet och sedan ansvarsfördelningsreformen 2007 fortfarande Utlennings Direktoratet's (UDI) ansvarighet på samma sätt som vuxna asylsökande, medan ensamkommande barn under 15 år faller under Barne og familiedepartementet's (Bufetat) domän. I Sverige är alla ensamkommande under 18 att betrakta som barn och sedan 2006 därigenom kommunernas ansvar under tillsyn av Socialstyrelsen. Dock placeras t.ex. ensamkommande ungdomar på gruppboenden (HVB-hem) i mycket större utsträckning än barn yngre än 15 år.

Konstruktionen av ålder och mognad där 18 årsdagen utgör vattendelaren mellan det autonoma vuxna subjektet och det beroende barnet, är samtidigt också kontextuell: när eller om det ensamkommande barnet eller ungdomen tilldelats uppehållstillstånd och i och med det lyfts ut ur asylprocessen, så kan ålder tolkas olika. Ensamkommande unga vuxna över 18 år kan då tolkas som sårbara unga vuxna, utan socialt stöd och därför i behov av ett förlängt stöd och omsorg från samhället och sociala myndigheter.

I avhandlingens kapitel 6-8 är det istället intervjustudien som sätts i förgrunden.

I kapitel 6 är det omsorgspersoners tal om ensamkommande barn som analyseras. När omsorgspersoner talar om ensamkommande barn tar de i bruk olika och motstridiga konstruktioner. Ibland görs de ensamkommande barnen till särskilda, lätthanterliga, tacksamma och väluppfostrade undantag från det som då artikuleras som problematiska kategorier, såsom "placerade

barn i övrigt”, “invandrare”/ “invandrarkillar” etc., medan de i andra sammanhang konstrueras som speciellt utsatta för ohälsa p.g.a. flykttrauman och separationer. Ibland görs de ensamkommande barnen då till obalanserade, utåtagerande och problematiska subjekt, medan de i andra sammanhang ses som passiva och sårbara. Omsorgspersoner talar också om de ensamkommande barnen utifrån ett bristperspektiv: antingen i förhållande till deras tillskrivna kulturella handlingsberedskap och kön, där t.ex. de ensamkommande muslimska och/eller afghanska pojkarna konstrueras som potentiellt problematiska i förhållande till det som då görs till pojkarnas motsats; (frigjorda) svenska tjejer (och killar), och där det som konstrueras som den speciella situationen för de ensamkommande somaliska flickorna lyfts fram och då som en motsats till svenska kvinnor eller svenskhet. I andra sammanhang är det de ensamkommande barnens bristfälliga skolgång som sätts i förgrunden, vilket å ena sidan kommer att sätta sökljuset på ensamkommande barns skilda möjligheter att gå i skola i hemlandet och under flykten, samtidigt som å andra sidan lärarna också gör ensamkommande barn till en grupp av lite mindre lämpade elever i jämförelse med svenskfödda barn. Ensamkommande barn kan också artikuleras som “vilka barn som helst”, ett tal som kommer att rikta fokus och kritik mot situationella faktorer i Sverige kring de ensamkommande barnen och ungdomarna; att t.ex. befinna sig i en asylprocess eller ha mindre vuxenstöd än andra barn. Utåtagerande beteende bland de ensamkommande barnen och ungdomarna kan då t.ex. omtolkas och skrivas fram som ett naturligt beteende givet att den unge/a befinner sig i en normal utvecklingsfas (adolescens).

Kapitel 7 sätter sökljuset på de åtgärder omsorgspersoner legitimerar givet sina problematiseringar. Ibland kommer omsorgspersonerna att betona vikten av restriktioner, kontroll och sanktionsåtgärder riktat mot barn och ungdomar som då konstrueras som krävande och problematiska. Kompensatoriska strategier betonas som viktigt inom skolan för att komma till rätta med de kunskapsbrister som omsorgspersonerna anser att de ensamkommande barnen och ungdomarna har. Flera av lärarna understryker att en av deras viktigaste uppgifter är att dämpa barnens och ungdomarnas förväntningar genom att förmå dem att se realistiskt på det som då problematiseras som deras (begränsade) möjligheter i Sverige. Även om lärare kopplar de ensamkommande barnens skolsvårigheter till strukturella faktorer görs också elevers eventuella framsteg till exempel på individuella undantag, vilket underblåser konstruktionen av det ensamkommande barnet som ett barn med svårigheter i skolan. Skolans och introduktionsprogrammets strukturella roll i reproduktion av underordning riskerar på detta sätt att osynliggöras. Kompensatoriska strategier kommer också att handla om att omsorgspersonerna

accentuerar betydelsen av att visa ungdomarna vad som "gäller i Sverige", genom att lära dem tvätta och städa och sköta sig, passa tider etc. vilket konstrueras som en motprestation till det omsorgspersonerna upplever att barnen får i Sverige, eller genom att ensamkommande pojkar och flickor görs till måltavlor för könade kompensatoriska strategier. Mottagandet betonas sålunda inte som en rättighet barnen har, utan blir snarare till något barnen och ungdomarna kan göra sig förtjänta av genom att visa tacksamhet och skötsamhet tillbaka; flickorna genom att skjuta upp ett eventuellt barnafödande och satsa på att utbilda sig istället och pojkarna genom att lära sig att "respektera" svenska kvinnor och att inte ta för mycket strid med boendepersonalen. I andra sammanhang betonas värdet av att utveckla nya och mer ändamålsenliga metoder och rutiner för att bemöta ensamkommande barn och deras behov. Om barnen och ungdomarna istället konstrueras som ett fall av vilket barn som helst, accentuerar istället omsorgspersonerna vikten av att bygga nära relationer och att ge de ensamkommande barnen och ungdomarna ett förlängt samhälleligt stöd.

I kapitel 8 är det de tio intervjuade ungdomarna och unga vuxnas tal om sina erfarenheter av att kategoriseras som ensamkommande barn som analyseras. I ungdomarnas tal blir det påtagligt hur de förhåller sig till de konstruktioner och problematiseringar som lyfts fram i media och policy, men också i intervjuerna med omsorgspersoner. Samtidigt är det också tydligt att ungdomarna kan välja att tolka om vissa innebörder och på det sättet göra ett motstånd. Några av ungdomarna positionerade sig som respektabla i förhållande till sina flyktberättelser, antingen genom att berätta om situationella faktorer som gjort att de tvingats på flykt, men också genom att peka på sin aktiva roll i förhållande till att skaffa sig ett bättre liv samt utstå strapatser och dramatiska händelser. Andra berättar istället genom tystnad och genom att betona att flykten var så hemsk så ungdomen inte vill berätta om resan eller genom att kortfattat säga att de inte kommit till Sverige om de inte tvingats migrera pga. av kontextuella faktorer som krig i hemlandet. Gemensamt i de tre sätten att berätta är att ungdomarna legitimerar sin närvaro "här" genom att peka på förhållanden som gjort det omöjligt att stanna "där". Ungdomarna positionerar sig också som respektabla i förhållande till att vara i Sverige, genom att visa på hur bra det har gått för dem på olika sätt. Framgångssagorna kommer ofta att handla om hur ungdomen eller den unga vuxna lyckats med att skaffa vänner, lyckas i skolan och lära sig svenska, "mot alla odds" eller på "kort tid". Påtagligt blir också hur ungdomarna konstruerar svenskhet som en binär motsats till invandrarskap. Ibland genom att betona Sverige och svenskheten som en trygg hamn och ett välfungerande samhälle, men andra gånger också genom att lyfta fram Sverige och svenskheten som kall, rigid, distanserad och

tråkig. När Sverige konstrueras som ett kallt samhälle görs detta mot bakgrund av att invandrarskapet görs synonymt med värme, socialitet, “närhetskulturer” och öppenhet. Genom att betona sin samarbetsvillighet, undvika att ta strid eller undvika att vara en som “förväntar sig”/kräver “för mycket”, presenterar ungdomarna sig som respektabla undantag till “problematiska ungdomar” eller andra ensamkommande ungdomar. Ibland presenteras detta å ena sidan som sätt att “spela med” för att inte få problem. Att ta strider konstrueras å andra sidan som något som kan skapa problem senare. Att tolka om innebörden av ensamkommande ungdomar som offer, är ett annat sätt att göra motstånd på; antingen genom att som ung man positionera sig som en “cool kille”, en som kan reglerna och spelar med eller genom att betona ensamkommande barn som starkare och självständigare än andra. Samtidigt är det också tydligt att ungdomarna och de unga vuxna på sätt och vis har kommit att internalisera den svenska (och norska) blicken: de betraktar sig själva utifrån och undertrycker ibland sina önskemål för att passa in och bli accepterade av ett svenskt samhälle och för att undvika att tillskrivas en skamfull position. Ungdomarna konstruerar det också som ett individuellt ansvar att “lyckas i Sverige”, genom att lära sig svenska snabbt och genom att vara arbetsamma.

Avhandlingen visar att det sällan finns en giltig tolkning, men att olika problematiseringar och läsningar också finns till inom samma diskurs, samtidigt som de motstridiga bilderna, berättelserna och ambivalenserna som samexisterar där tenderar att följa en särskild logik och favorisera bestämda tolkningar och lösningar framför andra.

I förhållande till en diskurs om ensamkommande barn och ungdomar finns det en tydlig samstämmighet i tolkningar mellan Norge och Sverige, men också mellan de nationella tolkningarna och vardagslivet; ensamkommande barn skrivs fram som å ena sidan behövande och legitima mottagare av stöd, å andra sidan förknippas de med en rädsla för strategisk migration, med olika former av irreguljär migration och/eller som problematiska och svårhanterliga subjekt vilket också gör dem till måltavla för kontrollåtgärder och praxis som syftar till att särskilja potentiella strategier (icke-legitima) från de legitima. Särskiljandets praxis färgar samtidigt också av sig på det sätt myndigheter och media skriver fram ensamkommande barn som då blir tve tydiga och ambivalenta subjekt.

I norska och svenska media har berättelser om försvunna ensamkommande barn kopplats ihop med fenomen som människohandel och smuggling och därigenom förvandlat en diskussion berörande asyl och asylrätt till en diskussion om eventuella risker – “sekuritisering” – och där distinktioner görs mellan “riktiga” offer och möjliga strategiska migranter. Mediernas

berättelser har också kommit att ta utgångspunkt i klassiska dikotomier och stereotyper på ett sätt som riskerar att homogenisera en grupp av heterogena barn och ungdomar i officiell begreppsbildning. Ensamkommande barn har därigenom positionerats som en ambivalent dubbel-exponering, varken vän eller fiende. Inom den norska och svenska asylpolicyn finns det vidare en tendens att skapa "undantagsutrymmen" för barn inom en restriktiv migrationsregim snarare än att ifrågasätta rättvisan i systemet som sådant.

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Appendix I

Information pamphlet in Swedish describing the aim of the FoU i Väst/GR study to youngsters who had arrived Sweden as unaccompanied minors



Vill du berätta för oss om dina erfarenheter av att komma ensam till Sverige?

Att vara ung och komma ensam till ett nytt land kan vara svårt. Därför arbetar vi med ett forskningsprojekt där vi vill undersöka hur barn och ungdomar som kommit ensamma till Sverige har det och hur ni mår. Och vad man skulle kunna göra för att ni ska få det bättre.

Vi tror att du som själv kommit ensam till Sverige vet mycket om detta. Vi skulle därför vilja prata med dig om dina erfarenheter. Men du bestämmer själv om du vill prata med oss.

Vi som vill prata med dig heter Charlotte Mellander och Live Stretmo. Vi är forskare från Göteborgs universitet och FoU i Väst/GR. FoU i Väst/GR är en ”forsknings- och utvecklingsavdelning” som arbetar för att göra livet bättre för människor som bor i Göteborg, Mölndal, Ale, Kungälv, Kungälv, Kungälv, Kungälv, Tjörn, Stenungssund, Alingsås, Lerum, Lilla Edet, Partille, Öckerö och Härryda. Målet med forskningsprojektet är att göra det bättre för barn och ungdomar som själva kommer hit från ett annat land.

Det du säger i intervjun stannar mellan dig och oss forskare. Dina svar och dina resultat kommer att behandlas så att inte obehöriga kan ta del av dem. Informationen som kommer fram under intervjun kommer att lagras på en säker plats i tio år (i enlighet med arkivlagen). Vi kommer inte att berätta för någon att du har pratat med oss och ingen skall kunna känna igen dig eller din historia i det vi kommer att skriva. Vi kommer att presentera projektet i en rapport, i forskningsartiklar samt på konferenser. När vi presenterar vad du och andra ungdomar har berättat för oss så kommer vi att göra det på ett sådant sätt att ingen kan förstå att det du sagt kommer från just dig eller någon av de andra ungdomarna.

Det vi vill fråga dig om är hur du tycker att det har varit att komma till Sverige. Vi vill till exempel gärna veta hur du tycker att det har varit att bo i familjehem, på gruppboende eller i annat boende. Går du i skola? Jobbar du? Vad tycker du om det? Vad gör du på fritiden? Intervjun kommer att ta ungefär en timme och du bestämmer när och var vi ska träffas.

Det är viktigt att veta att det att vara med i studien är frivilligt. Du kan när som helst bestämma dig för att säga nej till att vara med utan att säga varför. Vi som vill prata med dig har inget med din asylprocess att göra och kan heller inte påverka ett asylbeslut. Du får heller ingen direkt ekonomisk ersättning för att delta i studien, men en biobiljett bjuder vi på.

När vi är klara med det här projektet kommer vi att ge ut en forskningsrapport. Om du vill får du gärna den rapporten av oss.

Kan du tänka dig att vara med i det här projektet och låta oss intervjua dig? Eller vill du veta mer innan du bestämmer dig? I så fall kan du ge ditt samtycke till att vi får kontakta dig för att berätta mer. Om du hellre vill kontakta oss kan du göra det på telefon eller mejl.

Med vänliga hälsningar:

Live Stretmo och Charlotte Melander

Appendix II

Information pamphlet in Swedish describing the aim of the FoU i Väst/GR study to caregivers



EUROPEISKA UNIONEN
Europeiska flyktingfonden



Information om en FoU studie om ensamkommande barn i GR-regionen

Du har mottagit detta informationsbrev för att tänka genom om du vill delta eller höra mer om studien: *Ensamkommande barn och ungdomar i Göteborgsregionen – Stödinsatser och vardagsliv*

Bakgrund:

FoU i Väst/GR har tillsammans med Gryning Vård AB startat ett 2-årigt projekt som syftar till att genomlysna mottagandet av ensamkommande barn inom Göteborgsregionen. Projektet är medfinansierat från Europeiska Flyktingfonden. Bland annat kommer såväl ensamkommande ungdomar som myndighetspersoner och stödpersoner att intervjuas för att få mer kunskaper om ensamkommande barn och unga i Göteborgsregionen. Syftet med studien är att med resultatet som underlag bidra till att utveckla och stärka insatserna i mottagandet och det stöd som ges.

Varför du får denna information:

Under hösten 2011 kommer ansvariga forskare för projektet att genomföra intervjuer med ett urval myndighets- samt stödpersoner. Vi vänder oss till dig som i ditt arbete eller vardagsliv kommer i kontakt med ensamkommande barn och ungdomar t.ex. som socialsekreterare, god man, boendepersonal, personal inom primärvården, skolpersonal eller familjehemsförälder.

De frågor som vi vill ställa kommer att handla om dina erfarenheter av arbetet med ensamkommande barn och ungdomar.

Hantering av data:

Att vara med i denna studie är förstås frivilligt och du kan när som helst välja att avböja att delta. Det du säger i intervjusituationen kommer att behandlas på sådant sätt att ingen obehörig får ta del av uppgifterna. Intervju-materialet kommer att lagras i enlighet med arkivlagen (under tio år) på ett säkert ställe. Resultaten av studien kommer att publiceras i en rapport, i

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forskningsartiklar samt på konferenser. I rapport- eller artikelform skall ingen kunna spåra eller förstå att det som sagts i intervjun kommer från dig.

Projektansvariga:

Vi som genomför studien är Live Stretmo och Charlotte Melander och är verksamma som forskare vid FoU i Väst/GR samt Göteborgs Universitet.

Live.Stretmo@grkom.se

Charlotte.Melander@grkom.se

Har du frågor eller funderingar om denna studie är du välkommen att kontakta oss per telefon eller e-post för att få höra mer.

Med vänliga hälsningar

Live Stretmo och Charlotte Melander

Appendix III

Interview guide in Swedish, caregivers

VARDAGSLIV - BEMÖTANDE/INSATSER:

Hur arbetas det kring vardagslivet för ensamkommande barn?

Vad finns det för specifika insatser inom ditt område som kan vara bra att lyfta fram, såsom inom Skolan? Hälsa- och sjukvården? Som God man? Som boendepersonal? Som familjehemsförälder?

Vad säger myndighetspersonen/resurspersonen om mottagandet?

Hur tolkar myndighet/resursperson sitt uppdrag i förhållande till ensamkommande barn och ungdomar?

Vad är viktigt?

Hur särskiljer sig uppdraget från andra verksamheter?

Vad är speciellt viktigt för ensamkommande ungdomar?

Vad är speciellt för just de erfarenheter som ditt uppdrag innebär?

Svårigheter/goda erfarenheter?

”VÄNTAN”:

Hur ser de olika ”insatserna” ut som just du/ni kan erbjuda ensamkommande barn och ungdomar under väntan på slutligt asylbesked?

Vad är det för utmaningar som kännetecknar denna period? Hur hanteras olika utmaningar under denna period?

Erfarenheter av olika typer av svårigheter?

Eller utmaningar?

Vad har fungerat bra? Varför?

Vad har inte fungerat bra? Varför?

Hur jobbas med integration under väntan?

NÄTVERK:

Hur ser det professionella nätverket kring barnet ut från myndighets/stödpersonens synvinkel?

Hur fungerar detta?

GOVERNING THE CHILD – MEDIA, POLICY AND PRACTICE

Hur erfar myndigheten/stödpersonen att kontakt med andra berörda parter fungerar?

Hur talas det om samverkan kring ensamkommande barn; vilka utmaningar finns?

Vilka goda erfarenheter finns?

Hur arbetar du/ni för att barnet håller kontakt med familj/vänner ”där hemma”?

Hur arbetar du/ni för att underlätta ensamkommande barns kontakt med familj/vänner i ursprungslandet och på andra platser och för att underlätta integration i sociala gemenskaper i Sverige?

Finns det insatser som särskilt riktar sig mot god integration samt inkludering i närmiljö? Vad? Hur? Erfarenheter?

BOENDEERFARENHETER:

Hur tycker sig myndighetspersonen/resurspersonen att olika boenden fungerar för olika ensamkommande barn och ungdomar?

Vilka utmaningar ser myndighetspersonen/resurspersonen som viktiga?

FRAMTIDEN:

Hur talar myndigheten/resurspersonen om ensamkommande barn och vilka möjligheter finns för de ensamkommande barnen att få en god integration i Sverige eller i ett annat land? Skola/hälso-och sjukvård/god man/boende personal/social sekreterare vad tror ni är viktiga områden att satsa på för att underlätta för god integration?

Hur talar myndigheten om sitt uppdrag i förhållande till ensamkommande barn och ungdomar i framtiden?

Vad är viktigt att tänka på?

Hur bör vi arbeta vidare?

Appendix IV

Interview guide in Swedish, unaccompanied minors

Bakgrund:

Ålder:

Kön:

Ursprungsland:

Berätta om dig: (Fritid, intressen)

Vilka personer är viktiga för dig? Vilka personer beundrar du? (Utanför Sverige, i Sverige) Vilka personer vänder du dig till när du behöver hjälp och stöd? Undrar om något? Kan du nå de viktigaste personerna i ditt liv?

Situationen i hemlandet:

Hemförhållanden/Familjesituationen: (föräldrar i livet, har ungdomen haft båda föräldrarna under uppväxten, ensam förälder, inte kontakt med förälder, föräldralös, syskonrelationer, "extended family", upplevelser av sitt familjenätverk, vänner i hemland, andra viktiga personer/vuxna.

Uppväxten/(Klass)bakgrund: sysselsättning, boende, utbildning. Har du gått i skola? Hur många år? Hur såg skoltiden ut? Har du arbetat?

Hur såg en vanlig dag ut för dig i hemlandet? Vad gillade du att göra?

Berätta om ditt liv innan ankomsten till Sverige? Hur levde du i hemlandet?

Med vilka?

Om du vill får du gärna berätta om resan. Hur såg en vanlig dag under resans gång ut?

I Sverige:

Berätta om din första tid i Sverige: Boende? Vilka typer av boende (transit, gruppboende etc.) Hur gillade du det? Vad gjorde du på dagarna? Vem umgicks du med? Kände du dig trygg? Kunde du sova på natten? Vilka personer var viktiga för dig i denna period? Är de fortfarande viktiga för dig? Vilka

Under asylprocessen:

Hur bodde du medan du väntade på asylbeslut? Hur gillade du det? Kände du dig trygg? Vilka personer var viktiga för dig i denna period? Är de betydelsefulla för dig idag?

Hur har du mått under tiden/nu?

Var kom du sedan? Berätta? Hur trivdes du? Hade du tillfrågats om det nya boendet? Hur såg dina önskemål om boende ut? Kunde du ge uttryck för missnöje?

När kom du i kontakt med god man och juridiskt ombud? Hur har kontakterna fungerat för dig?

Vardagslivet i nutid och framtiden:

Berätta om ditt liv nu? Var bor du?

Familjesituation i Sverige: Släkt? Vänner? Syskon? Barn? Make/maka? Andra vuxna?

Skola? Går du i skolan? Vilket program? Hur trivs du? Önskemål? Hur fungerar det med lärare? Vem umgås du med i skolan? Vem umgås tillsammans? Varför? Är det samma i skolan som på fritiden?

Jobb? Arbetar du? Med vad? Hur har du fått jobb? Vad skulle du vilja göra/arbota med nu?

Fritid: Hur ser en vanlig dag ut för dig?

Hur trivs du nu? Vänner? Partner? Familj? Hur ser du på framtiden i och utanför Sverige? Vad vill du syssla med? Vilka drömmar har du? Vem kan hjälpa dig? Vad kommer du jobba med? Var kommer du bo?

Om du behöver något, finns det ekonomi för att skaffa det du behöver? Känner du att du kan leva som andra? Hur gör du för att skaffa dig sådana saker? Vad är vanligt att göra för att få de saker ni behöver? Hur gör dina vänner/bekanta?

(Väl)mående:

Vad gör dig glad? Vad gillar du att göra? Vad gör dig orolig? Vad gillar du inte att göra? Hur mår du? Sover du på natten? Har du ont i kroppen? Besvär? Får du hjälp med detta? Har du fått hjälp någon stans ifrån? Har du fått träffa läkare i Sverige? Känner du att du har någon att prata med om allt? Vilka sammanhang gör dig glad? Vem går du till när du är ledsen?

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